Everybody's Magazine

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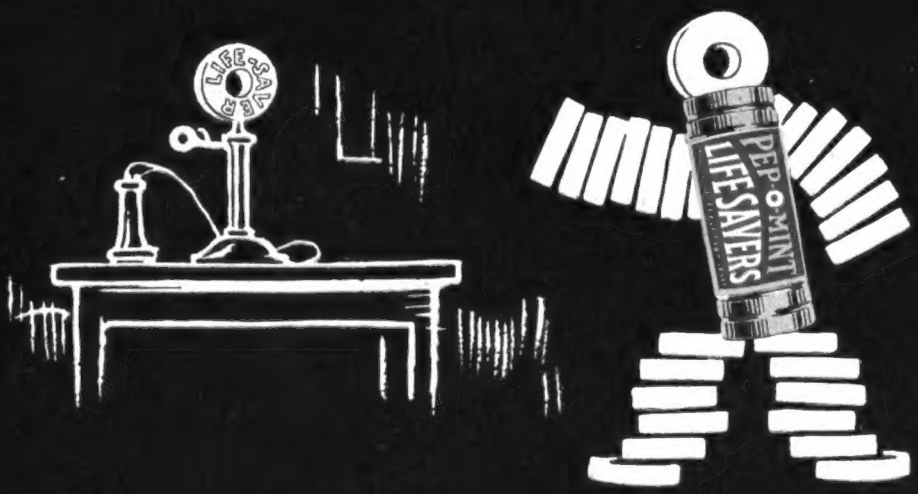

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Everybody's Magazine

NUMBER THREE MARCH, 1920 VOLUME XLII

Fortune's Favorites

By Mary Brecht Pulver

Seven thousand dollars and all their dreams come true . . . This is what happened to raggety *Rose Anthony* and her "shiftless" father. What they did with their fortune and what it did to them is one of Mrs. Pulver's finest stories. "Black Mountain," another story by Mrs. Pulver with the same simple human appeal, will appear in a later number.

Far away on Himalay
I would not be a King, enough
Of woe it is to love;
The path to power is steep and rough
And tempests reign above.
I would not climb the imperial throne,
'Tis built on ice, which fortune's sun
Thaws in the height of noon.
—SHELLEY.

IT WAS a man from Hartridge who brought the news. He came up in one of those little cars, sent on, no doubt, by Messrs. Butts and Wiley, the event being of such importance. At any rate, he carried all the official notices and necessary papers.

Peel Anthony had taken a pail and started down to the spring for water, Rose having been "at him" for some time to fill up the kettle, and the man from Hartridge must have seen Peel through the hemlock lacing, for he stopped his car and jumped out, and went over and talked to Peel, producing his papers from an inner pocket.

"Dumb an' silly, I was," said Peel, after his great adventure was over, "an' you could ha' keeled me over with a cat's hind foot."

Evidently he stayed dumb and silly so long that Rose grew impatient, for she started down after him. And there she found the two of them the man from Hartridge and her father, with his pail still unfilled. Her father broke his news with a single, simple dramatic gesture.

"My God, Rose," he said faintly, "we're rich!"

You couldn't faze Rose easily. "I thought you came down here to fetch water, Pa. The kittle's most dry," and her voice was dry as the kettle, what with the fact that Peel Anthony's whimwhams from time to time were enough to make a girl wary. But this was not a whimwham. Peel took a step toward her, waving a piece of paper, his voice raw now with emotion.

"I tell ye it's the truth. Praise God from whom all blessin's flow. It's a legacy, Rose, from your grampaw's brother in the West, that I ain't ever heard of in years. You never can tell what your folks'll do. Blood's thicker than water. For look at this, comin' right down on me—puttin' an end to the hull grind—me that expected to keep on workin' to the bitter end."

"Workin'!" exclaimed Rose, then as she realized the tidings, her face went white and she clasped her hands together. "That case, then, we can buy the place, Pa. We kin pay off the mortgage, an' git some decent stuff to furnish up, an' some clothes—" then she broke off at something in her father's face, "Oh, Pa, it's *enough* money, ain't it? We don't only need four hundred to finish off the mortgage—you said *rich!*"

Peel had drawn a deep breath, with a sense, perhaps, of rendering his words with oratorical fitness. He ran his eye for a moment over the unpainted little shack of cheap clapboard, remote from the main-traveled ways, then he let it slide lightly over his daughter, standing with her cup-like head-dress of sleek dark braids, her skimpy faded-out gingham, and slim, shapely bare feet. A vast contempt welled into his voice.

"This here!" he said coldly. "We wouldn't bother with no cheap stuff like this. I said 'rich.' Real rich, Rose—pizen rich! We've got seven thousand dollars!"

For once Rose's aplomb failed. Although she denied it passionately afterward, Peel averred that at this point she crumpled down on the path, flung her apron over her head, and "let ker-hoo." The which, Rose said scornfully, was just "Pa's talk," but there is no doubt the pair of them were floored for a bit.

IF IT well-nigh floored Peel and Rose, you can fancy what it did to their neighbors—hard-working, conservative folk, scattered all through the section, in outlaying village purlieus or on hillside farm holdings. To have this piece of fortune befall Peel Anthony, a man who "never turned his hand to a decent chore if he could help it—fishin' an' huntin' an' loafin' all his time, an' not a God-blessed thing else!" It was bound to raise feeling.

"Not that I begredge it to Rose—" it was Mrs. Barna Addescomb who voiced this collective emotion—"not that I'd take it from her, God knows, though I do say my Minnie could ha' used a decent share, an' her the oldest of seven, an' Barna that tight with his money account of tryin' to git us one o' them dual-purpose cows—but fur *Peel Anthony*——"

"Rose's never mixed with the young folks much—never set foot in the house o' God," one objector cried.

"Oh, I'll say fur Rose, she tried. She's got the right kind o' feelin', an' if she don't go to church, she ain't always had the shoes to go in. But *Peel Anthony!*"

If you had asked his neighbors for a character of Peel, they would have used some shocking names, there's no gainsaying. An expert with rod or gun, he was freemason enough among the men in their outdoor life, canny in the ways of wild things and no mistake; and if the mood took him he would travel miles over hill and dale in the sourest or roughest weather on the trail of his quarry. If the mood took him. His life was consecrated to his moods. He knew no other law than impulse; no other urge than his wish. He lived from hand to mouth, by what shifts he could, and some of the folk thought even these not to bear examination. For what time they worked in field or quarry or factory, Peel lounged beside his fire or dozed in a sunny corner. His beard grew ratty, his clothes unkempt, and though his eye was placid and his brow unharried by care, after the fashion of the leisure class, he was, alas, unpopular. "Lazy loafer." "Nothin' better'n a tramp," his female neighbors declared him.

Perhaps Peel would have agreed. Quite likely. He would have taken his cob pipe out of his mouth, and spat amusedly across his tawny beard, and chuckled a bit philosophically with half-closed eyes—and gone his way. Nobody had ever altered his way—nobody but Rose. And she had not been able to do much. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," he said himself many a time when Rose remonstrated.

PEEL had come up out of West Virginia to the York State hills many years before, a youngish, fairly good-looking fellow then, with untidy hair and slouchy dress. He fell in with the Parsons Lumber Company, did a little desultory work "cutting out mine props," and in the winter "laid over a spell," and had kept it up indefinitely. He had brought certain sophistications with him: a mild acquaintance with the game of poker, a fairish taste for liquor, an utter disrespect for organized labor, and a line of dry, irreverent, loquacious humor that gave him *cachet* among the less desirable spirits. A bachelor of lax and undesirable habit—or so folk supposed.

But one October night, after he had lived here for some years, they learned otherwise. One of the Morgan young fellows had been along with Peel when it happened. The telegraph operator at

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Connorsville had wired over to Hallam that a package was left in the station-master's care for Peel Anthony. The Morgan young fellow had driven Peel over to get it.

And when they got there the package turned out to be a little girl. A tiny elf with a vivid little face, a smooth, golden skin, a pouting red button of a mouth, and two dark, velvety, solemn eyes that stared at the men unsmiling.

She was dressed outrageously in drabby-white dirty velvets and shoddy laces. But she was for Peel all right. There was a freight-tag tied to her arm with his name and address on it, and there was a letter to him in the ribbon at her waist.

MR. PEEL ANTHONY:

I am sending you your little girl your wife Mrs. Anthony having left her with me at her death the 4th inst. burial arrangements has been looked after by bennefit organisation but nothing for child. It is your wife Mrs. Anthony last wish I should find where you are at and forward child. she hoped you will look after it, it was appel of her eye and may God bless you if you do and your Father which is in heaven do the same for you.

Your truly

MRS. KATIE MELBIN.

Peel had let the Morgan young fellow read it.

"Don't it beat all?" he had asked, chewing away on his bit of shag, and staring around the dingy little station with its bleared oil-light and dreary stove.

"Mrs. Katie Melbin—I 'member the ol' hellion too—my little girl—well, well—pore Mamie, so that's the way it went with you—why, I ain't seen hair nor hide of you in six years, and this young 'un can't be—but—but, pshaw!—Mamie done the best she could, I s'pose; an' nobody kin say I didn't do dirt by her. I never was any hand at matrimony—pore Mamie—so you're dead."

He had gone over to the wee creature and bent his big ungainly self, eye level with her.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Wose," the tired little mouth quivered, and two big tears sprang into the child's eyes.

"Thar now! Ain't she a purty little thing?" Peel swung the little creature up into his arm, cuddling her a little. For answer she flung her tiny arms about his neck and kissed him, and a tide of pink had flooded Peel's face.

"Hell, now—can you beat it?" he asked sheepishly.

"What you goin' to do?" the Morgan young fellow asked, and Peel had turned on him fiercely.

"What *kin* I do? Keep the little rascal, of course. 'S about all I c'u'd do fur Mamie. 'Twan't her fault. I'd ought to stayed home. I hadn't oughta 've left her. An' don't the letter say the little gel's the apple o' her eye——"

SO PEEL had fathered the little Rose. He had carried her out to the poor diggings he called his own and set up housekeeping with her, and he had commissioned a woman acquaintance, an Irish woman, to get the child new clothes and turn an eye on her now and again. And, finally, he had silenced the eternally wagging tongues about him.

"Didn't know you was a man o' fam'ly, Peel," a young section-hand chaffed him. "I hear you've got a bran'-new *daughter*."

"Yes," Peel drawled back slowly, "I have. I got a daughter an' she's got a daddy with stren'th in his right arm to settle anybody's that's too fresh." No one thereafter was "fresh" with regard to Peel Anthony's Rose, whose status he, and presently all his neighbors, accepted as the amende honorable to "pore Mamie."

As the years sped there were three things apparent in little Rose Anthony: That she adored her father; that she was a beauty; that she was a shrew. The first secured her only a mildly stirring approval in public esteem, her obligation to Peel being offset by that worthy's casual and precarious position; the second secured her a frankly expressed and prophetic disapprobation from the petticoat element; the third—but few people realize that a shrew is only a disappointed idealist.

LITTLE Rose Anthony's ideals had been set and definitely yearning from the beginning toward a patent respectability, as though nature offered a compensatory balance against the facts of her ill-starred parentage. Neatness, a valid public reputation, an established position, conformity, longings for these blazed in her as a tiny child. There had been no pains to disguise from her either in childish chaffing, or frank prognosis of her elders, her unique situation. It had become a lifelong and accepted wound in her heart to be healed over superficially, at least, by layers of careful effort toward approved convention.

She was only twelve when she had burst in on Peel late one snowy afternoon. Her eyes had blazed, jewel-wise, her cheeks flamed, her breath was gone. There were the marks of snowy battle upon her person. But all her emotion centered on her father, busy with his pipe.

"I licked 'em," she cried, "I licked the hull boilin'! Ain't no one kin throw straighter'n me. I won't have 'em callin' you names—sayin' things. But I'll tell you what, we got to git one."

Peel had removed his pipe and feet together. "Git what, honey?" he had asked.

"A parlor!" she shrieked. "A place fur comp'ny. Why, look at this room—traps an' guns on the walls, an' shelves any ol' how, and on'y *pieces* o' carpet layin' round. An' a kitchen stove, an' clothes hangin' on the wall, an' the chairs all broke, an' the attic stairs goin' right up out of it—an'—an' not even—not even—a—a sova."

"A sova!" Peel repeated dumbly.

"It ain't genteel. People that's genteel all has 'em. But I haven't got one—Viney Elson—" her face twisted, broke up, sobbing. "Viney Elson's folks is gittin' a new one this week with soap premiums. A green velvet sova—fur the parlor. To set on. They got a shelf all fancy shells, too, and pitcher albums, an' a organ, an' lace throws onto the chairs, but Viney says—to-day—she wouldn't even lemme see it. She says I ain't even worth lettin' see it. I ain't respectable enough to see it at all."

"Oh, pshaw—them Elsons!" Peel had spat amiably. "Oh, pshaw!"

"But we'd oughta have one—a sova," she wept.

"Fur the Lord's sake, why?" Peel had chuckled. "We ain't livin' in the sofa class, exactly, Rosie."

She made a despairing gesture. "Then how 'm I ever to git married? How 'm I ever to have a fella? You gotta have a sova to set on an' hold hands with. All the girls says so——"

"Pshaw, girl, you're too young to bother fillin' your head with notions."

Yet it had occurred to him that the day was not far off when his Rose would have to reckon with this subject.

Ultimately he decided in a vague, comfortable fashion, he ought to do something for her—something fatherly, provident. She was growing up a woods' witch, vividly pretty and graceful, but without a chance here in her neighborhood. He must do something—*would* do something. But the years slipped on and life moved as before. He fished and hunted and smoked and loafed. He went ragged, and often save for Rose's urgings unwashed, and unshaven. But at all times vastly, mightily comfortable.

"After all, Rose," he would say, at times when she railed at him, "the secret of easy livin' is to have jest enough. What you want an' need—no more. Simple-like, that's all. We're warm enough an' cheerful. The woods give enough fire-wood, we can grow our eatin', we're covered up decent, an' we got our health. That's somethin'. I kin raise the coin for tobaccy an' cawfee an' a bit o' sweet for you now and again. We got the trees an' the hills an' all the birds round us, an' the view down the river. I'd know as a man could ask fur more. What's this crazy rush to *have* things all fur, anyhow. It's livin' simple-like is best. I'm happy an' I know it."

"Well p'raps, but mebbe I ain't," Rose had flung back passionately.

"Then it's 'cause you're lookin' through the wrong spectacles, girl. Better change 'em. 'Nuff's enuff," the philosopher had concluded, refilling his pipe; "folks had ought to live easier in their minds."

"Well, if you go on this way, you'll have the easiness all to yourself," she retorted. "Folks ain't crowdin' round us any, I notice."

THIS was one summer when she was eighteen. But she was mistaken about the crowding, for the very next evening came one who was destined to come again and yet again, suing with wistful, indefatigable resolve for that which, like *ignis fatuus*, beckoned and allured, yet, apparently, ever receded. His name was Hilary Doddridge, and his people owned one of the largest farms in the region.

He was a young man turned twenty, and of a kind to give the eye pause. Young and brown and hardy of promise as a fine young sapling oak, and except for the sickly rigors of courtship upon him now—the enemy of virility—a very country Apollo. He came up the little path to Rose's house, and Rose watched him coming. She was wearing her best dress, because it was the only one she had, and she was shoeless.

Hilary Doddridge was hideously respectable. He carried a package under one arm tied with blue-and-silver cord, his hair was brushed back sleekly wet, his shoes squeaked their Sabbath loudest, and he smelt to Heaven like a civet-cat. Rose met his glance, judicial, appraising. There was no beam of encouragement.

At the foot of the steps Hilary paused, swallowing.

"I made out I'd come over to—to see

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"I licked' em!" she cried. "I licked the hull boiln'!"

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you this evening," he said, his gray eyes praying for mercy as they rested on the nonchalant, pretty, dark-eyed hamadryad.

"Sorry you came when the folks ain't to home," she answered curtly But Hilary had the real metal.

"I kin wait till they git back," he said, and he sat down on the step, wiping his face with his handkerchief.

"That's a nice-lookin' dog-rose," he said presently.

"Look at it all you want," the girl rejoined.

"I know a rose I'd ruther look at," Hilary bounced back. It drew first blood, for an odd color swept the girl's face.

"Better be more choicy," she said bitterly.

"I got the best taste in the county," he said cheerfully; then he added, "I fetched this little package over with me—to pass the time away."

"It does hang pretty heavy," she said coldly, and she stubbed her slim, brown toe against the neat white package he had slid along the step toward her.

Undismayed, Hilary had staid on some time, and when he rose he even dusted his trousers elegantly and said with a touch of defiance:

"I—I'll be comin' up again, Rose—come Thursday."

"Nobody asked you to," she flashed back under her breath, but she must have spoken *sotto voce*, for Hilary returned, as we have said, again, and yet again.

BUT Rose, going indoors that first evening, had stared about her in a dull despair—at the animal traps; at her father's shotgun and rifle on the wall; at the bare, dingy floor; the lumbering cook-stove; the desolate pine table; and the wooden stairway rising out of the room, toward her attic chamber, like a gruesome skeleton. She had sunk down her head on the kitchen table, and cried bitterly. There was no use; simply no use. There was no respectability here, no conformity. Oh, what a Pa! A Pa she loved—true, kind, benign, but so shiftless! A prince of grasshoppers with his strange and easy philosophy. What a chance for a girl, surrounded only by these utilitarian symbols, when convention cried out for other things—parlors, albums, a shelf with shells, a "sova." Why, she had not even shoes!

Yet, as we had said, Hilary Doddridge was a man of no ordinary metal. He came on Thursday and he came again. If Rose had no parlor to invite him to, there was a whole mountain to walk in, or sit in, in discreet nooks. And if Rose had no shoes, she had far better, shapely little feet, and a face that stopped one's gaze from roving elsewhere. Not that Rose yielded much. She scarcely let him touch her hand. She was wild as a cat against his offensive. He must be content with a guiding touch of her elbow over a rough place, with a pathetic snatch at her reluctant fingers saying good night. He had landed a kiss on her ear once, up in Taylor's Woods, and been repentant a whole week; and a few times he had kissed her hand. Once seizing it, he had planted a kiss on her little brown palm and sighed out of his swelling heart:

"The things I'd do fur you, Rosie!"

"What things?" her hand had faltered in his a moment.

"Give you things," he cried back; "pretty things that women likes. Stuff to fix yourself up with an'—an' a little house—nice little home with new pretty stuff in it—fur you an' me—" his hand tightened on hers, but Rose drew away with a little choked sigh.

"That's—that's real polite," she faltered; then the old bitterness blazed. "But what's the use talkin' so silly, Hilary Doddridge? Your folks—why the whole country laughs at you comin' up here. Can't you see—I ain't—suitable." Her breast heaved stormily. "Can't you see it?"

"You're suitable fur *me*. You're the prettiest, sweetest girl roun' these parts, an' I—I," the word tore its reluctant way through Hilary's shy lips, "I *love* you, Rose Anthony." He looked around defiantly, as though addressing Whom-It-May-Concern. "I love you, an' I'm a-goin' to marry you."

"Marry me! Why, I couldn't never marry anybody. You gotta have things to marry with. Housekeepin' things, an'—an' a chest, with towels and sheets——"

"Oh, Good Lord!" said Hilary cheerfully, prisoning her hand.

"Oh, who *wants* to marry?" she cried in an agony of pride.

"Send me away then—say you'll never have me," dared Hilary out of new-born recklessness. "Say 'go' and I'll go."

"Lord knows I ain't keepin' you," flamed Rose.

"Say 'go,'" he urged. "Go on—say it!"

"You been comin' round here all o' three months. I sh' think you'd know if I wanted you to go," she grumbled.

"Well, but I got to hear it from your own lips. Go on, say it. Say 'Go, Hilary Doddridge.'"

"Oh—shut up," she burst out, crying desperately. "I'm—jest—mixed—up—is all."

Hilary had smiled with a flash of warm hope in his heart. But though two years had passed, his suit had not advanced an inch. If Rose had never said "Go!" exactly—yet, equally, she had never said "Stay." His staying, his persistent, quiet wooing had been of his own volition. Two years! A long time. Perhaps the memory of it all flashed through the girl's mind on this auspicious evening when the tidings of great joy broke upon her and her father.

WITH deft fingers, like one bemused by a spell, she had spread the cloth, set out the frugal meal—tea, and boiled potatoes and brown flour gravy, and a bowl of wild strawberries.

As if by tacit consent neither she nor her father spoke. They were still under the spell. But with his third cup of tea Peel broke through it. From where he sat he could see through bare shadeless windows a distant view of winding silver river, girdled by hills, in soft deep tones of blue-green. The sun was setting down-river in a splash of rosy-mauve, and Peel sighed.

"I'd know as I c'd live anywheres else an' git a finer view. It's grander 'an any picture ever painted—an' free as air! And wild berries—they're pretty good eatin'. Not but what flour gravy! We gotta stick pretty close to it, an' I wouldn't mind the change."

"We can have pretty nigh what we want now, Pa—can't we?"

"Ain't anything I kin think of. We can show folks. You an' I's been a kind o' laffin'-stock to 'em long enough."

"Clothes first, Pa—we're hardly decent. Listen here," she sprang up and fetched a gay-covered paper book from a near-by shelf. "Listen to this—the Findler girls buys all their stuff from this house—listen here:

"'No. 3618-A:

"'This elegant creation is of the finest quality Georgette crêpe. It is modeled after the latest Paris creation; the bodice features the new bell sleeve and collarless throat. A rich near-silk foundation sets off the tunic, which is heavily beaded in pastelle shades. Comes in black, navy, Copen, orchid, rose and corn—' May Findler bought navy-blue, but I'm a mind to have rose-pink, Pa. An' on page thirty-seven—Wait, listen!—they's a bride's dress, white taffeta with chiffon and a bunch of orange-blossoms——"

"A BRIDE'S dress. Heaven's sake—what's in your head now, girl?"

"Well, but—Hilary—" her voice quivered a little. "I could marry off decent now."

"Hilary!" the philosopher cleared his throat, pushed aside the dish of flour gravy, and got up, drawing out his cob.

"Hilary," he repeated more firmly, then sighed. "Rose, I never said much before—I—I never thought you set enuff store by Hilary"—he paused, moved to the stove, applied his pipe to a live coal, lipped it with a sucking satisfaction—"but now—now, I may's well speak. It's—it's goin' to make a great difference—this—this here legacy. You an' me—folks have had their fill predictin' things fur us, but it's our turn. We got our own little come-back, an' we're a-goin' to show 'em——"

"But where does Hilary come in—he—he's stood by us!"

The philosopher deprecated Hilary. "Hilary belongs here, with all the rest," he grew thoughtful. "Money—money's responsibility, Rose. You can't go along old ways with it. You can never do simple-like's when you haven't any. An' now—well, we gotta do our share, girl. What I mean is," before her darkling glance, "what I mean, is, it'd be foolish fur you to marry Hilary Doddridge—bein' we're people o' means now, an' him a mere farmin' man!"

"But if—if I want to marry Hilary?"

"Then I'd forbid it," Peel raised a grave hand. "I'll never give my consent to my daughter's marryin' like that."

"An' if I remin' you I ain't your daughter," she cried stormily.

"Then I'll remin' you o' the serpent that was took into a bosom where it bit," said Peel still gravely.

The girl turned pale, her breath shook with sobs.

"That's right. Call me a pig, Pa. I s'pose I deserve it. Oh, I know I owe you everything—only—only——"

"Then obey me," said Peel.

Rose looked out of the window, where the sunscape had gone deep violet. A single figure climbed the hill.

"That's—Hilary—now," she said with trembling lips. "He—he always tole me he'd go when I said the word."

"Say it now, then," urged Peel gravely, "good's any time. You know," he added, "he'll be all the quicker to have you, now the money's come."

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She stubbed her slim brown toe against the neat white package he had slid along the step toward her.

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II

IT WAS, as we have said, a nine days' wonder. Rumor flew through the countryside—that Peel had gone down to Hartridge the day after the great tidings and been given a New York draft for the whole legacy; that he had taken the same to the Hartridge Bank, and cashed the amount in full for greenbacks, "enough to choke a hog;" that he had laid out a portion of the same in new raiment; that he was contemplating new and mysterious schemes, a little undecided as to his next move.

Certainly a new atmosphere surrounded the Anthonys. A Sabbatical purified hush pervaded the little hillside house. The single lower room had been swept and garnished; a neighbor woman had been hired by the day to chore for them, and Peel, in blue serge and gamboge shoes, and Rose in a taffeta gown, sat stiffly, hands in lap, adjusting their ideas to the gigantic coup. They were said to be reserved, a bit stiff, under their new responsibilities, but this may have been merely the paralyzing effect of their new concept.

To an old friend here and there Peel had been utterly confidential, even loquacious. He had shown his roll, he had even confessed to certain weaknesses, hidden deep in his bosom these many years, which now he had hastened to gratify; to wit, a passion for the banjo, which he had always hankered to play, and a continual yearning for licorice jujubes. He had bought twenty pounds of jujubes the day he cashed his draft, and a handsome banjo—"a right smart tool"—which thus far, however, he had not ventured to touch. He had also confessed to Jeff Willet that respect for his riches had caused him to discard his old cob. He was using a flaming new amber and meerschaum now, that came in a purple-plush case lined with pea-green satin. Peel "put the pipe to bed every night like a dam' baby in a cradle." "It's uncomfortable on my lip, too, an' not a mossel o' flavor."

Rose revealed less. She looked like a person with a fever, a little drawn, with bright eyes. There were times when she was almost garrulous, others when she seemed to sulk, but visitors were agreed on one thing: Rose was a handsome girl. Pretty as a picture, whether in her old rags or this new modish outfit. Queer that Hilary Doddridge wasn't in evidence, though, mighty queer, and him so patient an' endurin' before now.

Visitors there were many. Old neighbors calling in twos and threes, curious, speculative, envious, derisive even—but callers.

Life was a continuous "at home" for Peel and Rose, and those who could not come wrote. News of the fortune had penetrated quite far. There was a "piece" about it in the Briston *Weekly*.

But Peel was equal to it all. On his sixth day he announced a decision.

"Me an' Rose here, we calc'late to go away. Ain't no reason why we should stick around in the backwoods all our lives. We'll visit roun' and live in the cities, I s'pose. We may go to West Virginny after while, but first off we'll go to Richmond City an' stay a spell. We're a little tired o' country ways, an' now we're rich, we're a-goin' to move on. I've never been able to give Rose here, much advantages, but I'm goin' to learn her city ways now—not goin' to be backwoods no more. Not that I qu'al with the country, but money's responsibility. You got to live right up to it."

"An' what about Hilary?" one questioner thrust at Rose shyly, but Peel answered for her.

"Oh—Hilary," he said condescendingly. "My Rose'll look elsewhar, I cal'clate. Goin' off to stay in the city, she'll likely meet some feller over there an' settle down."

They went off to the city. Bag and baggage, they took the train at Carter's Eddy, and Hiram Handy, who drove them over, told afterward how full of glee and interest Peel was.

Yet though he was eager to go, a nostalgic pang must have seized him, for as the train swung away from the Eddy, and he caught the last familiar curve of enfolding peaks, Peel looked back long and earnestly.

"There, now, that's the prettiest bit o' hill an' river you'd want. I never see it look better any June—you can see way up to Doddridge's farm. They're cuttin' hay out the hill, but the south field's all daisies. Pretty, ain't it, Rose?"

"Fine," Rose said rigidly, but she wasn't even looking at it. She was sitting with eyes tightly closed, her head slightly bent. Now a single round, scorching, silver drop fell on her newly gloved hand.

AH, BUT the city—Mecca and eternal wonderment of the country-bred! For the first time Rose sampled it all—the blazing beauties of Richmond City, the county seat. She had never dreamed of life like this.

A bedroom whose beauty was unbelievably lovely! Double curtains of Nottingham lace and sky-blue silk, a brass bed that glittered like the gates of the Celestial City, a stuffed blue-velvet tête-à-tête—called a "teet" in Carter's Eddy, green velvet foliage underfoot, delicate rose walls covered with gold-framed engravings. It was beyond any parlor of her dreams. And adjoining—incredible—a bathroom consecrated to herself alone, a mystery of nickel and white enamel.

You could tell you were in the city without even looking out of your window. For a murmurous uproar entered: a clatter of wheels on cobbles, of grinding trolley-cars, of clanging, banging bells, of trains moving on a near-by track. And when you looked out you saw a ten-story apartment-house towering above, or the turmoil of the narrow street four stories below. And there was the wondrous dining-room, a red-velvet labyrinth with great imitation palms and obsequious waiters, a foyer with bright paintings, a sleek clerk at his desk, telephone, lights—a moving stream of people, elevators that moved at one's bidding. All this she was having at five dollars a day.

And for amusement there was the city itself. The alluring sparkle of windows, of gay finery, of spangled cinema palaces, of candy and soda shop. It was delightful to teeter along on unfamiliar high heels peering in, entering to sip interior delights, purchase lavishly.

But on her fifth morning Rose got out of her celestial bed languidly. She stood stretching sleepily, her dark hair unbound, her eyes heavy. After a moment she slipped into a dressing-gown and crossed her bath to Peel's room. Her father was up and dressed, all but his shoes. He sat now, stockinged feet supported on a chair, eating a vivid red apple, paring it carefully with a knife. He looked at Rose deprecatingly.

"Just took 'em off a bit. My feet's a little swelled up. We been a-walkin' a lot. Thought I'd eat a apple, too. Bought 'em last night off that Eytalian. Fresh apples in June, but, God. they're Dead Sea fruit. Jes' like cork inside——"

"You ben to the ten-cent store a'ready," Rose said accusingly, her eyes on a brown parcel.

"Just stepped out," Peel coughed slightly; "it's amazin' what a big passel you can git for a little down there."

A TEN-CENT emporium near by had been his passion these three days. But Rose forgot her rebuke. She stretched out her arms again with a little shiver half languorous, half fierce.

"What I want to know is—when are we goin' on?"

"Goin' on?"

"Oh, somewheres else; we can't jes' stay here stuffin' ourselves, and wearin' clothes. I—I feel restless. Can't sleep. I want to go on. It's too noisy here, anyhow. They're other cities. They's New York."

"I know," he soothed, "but they's no hurry. All cities is alike—New York too, only more of it."

"But I want to go on," the girl moved across the room, tapped with nervous fingers on the bed-rail. "I—seems like I'm all on edge, Pa. At first 'twas nice—but now the racket makes my head ache."

"I know," Peel closed his knife with a little clip. "Tell you what, Rosie, I've been a-thinkin'. I don't want to be prematoor, but fur folks that's got the means—an' the way my feet's ben hurtin'—well, girl, I was a-goin' to keep it a surprise, but I'll let the cat out. I'm a-goin' to git us a aut'mobile. They's a party spoke to me yestaday. He's got a grand one for sale. Ain't only had it a month or two. It makes things easier. Good as new. He give three thousan' fur it, an' he'll let me take it fur fifteen hundred."

"Why'n't you buy a new one?"

"Rosie! A bargain's a bargain, even to rich folks. I ain't too proud fur second-hand, specially if it's high-grade stuff. This is better'n I could git fur first-hand at the price. This here car was made in France. You can't git any of them like it over here—even the parts was French-made. He said he'd take us a sample ride this morning."

"Well, you better be a little careful."

"You think your Pa ain't got eye-teeth? I'll look out fur us an' don't forgit it. Not but what they's lots o' confidence men in the world. Party came up in the lobby las' night and pointed out several men here—'sellin' lines fur investors', he put it. He done me the courtesy to put me on to 'em. Not that I'd ha' bit. I can look out when it comes time to investin'. I've got a cool head. I got my roll in the hotel safe, an' they ain't no one kin swipe it. I tole this party Fraser so, las' night—nice, plain-dressed, sensible party. He owns a bicycle factory out West. Tole me he come on fur a little vacation. I asked him to come along on the ride to-day."

(*Continued on page 86*)

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He dropped his scythe and came to her with long eager strides. The girl held out her hands.

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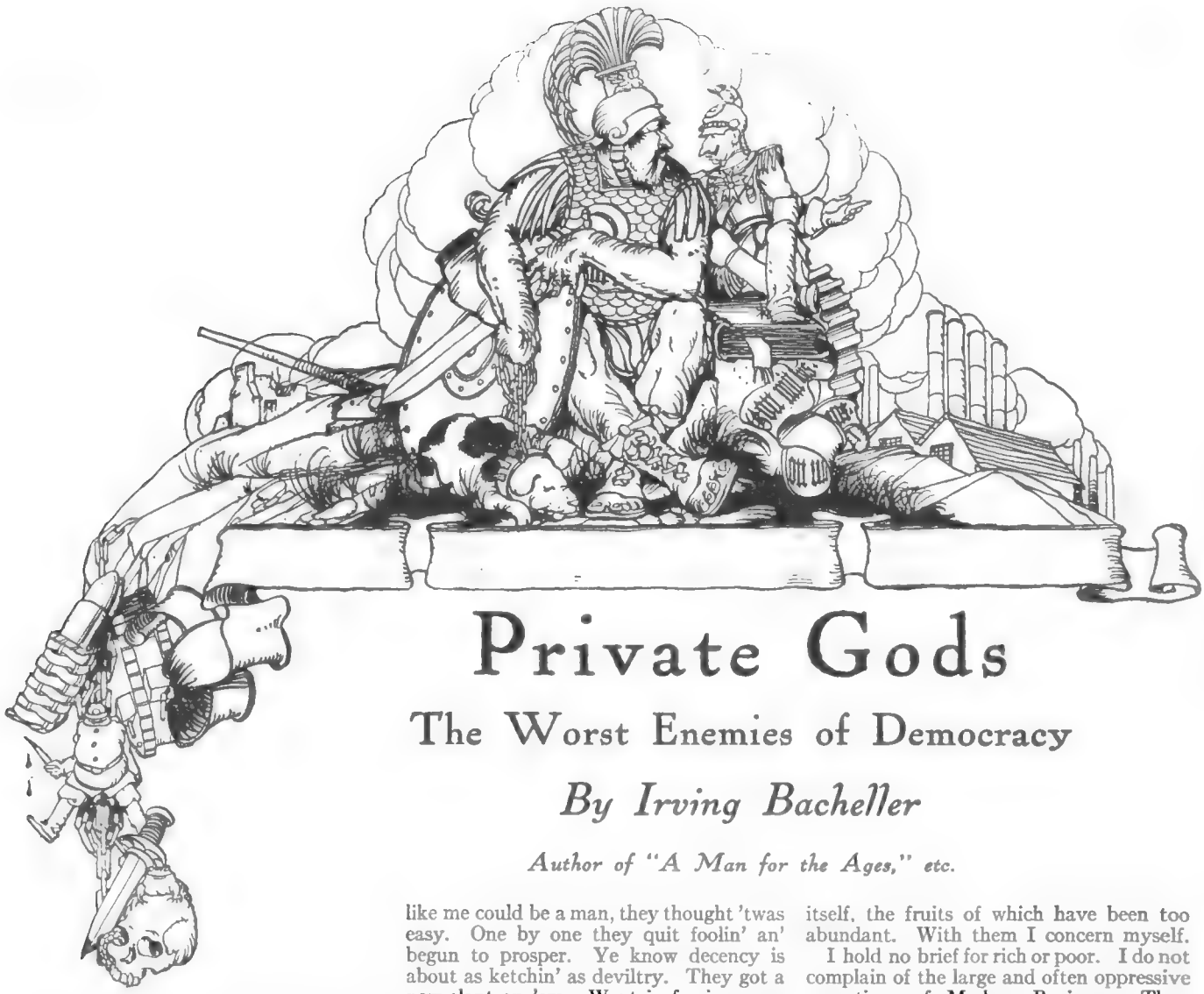

Private Gods

The Worst Enemies of Democracy

By Irving Bacheller

Author of "A Man for the Ages," etc.

ONE summer day, walking in a valley of New England, I came to a thrifty and beautiful countryside. There were handsome houses and stately elms and pleasant gardens and smooth and fruitful fields.

"This is a good-looking country," I said to a man who stood in a dooryard.

"Don't look no better'n 'tis," he answered.

"Nature has done a lot for it," I remarked.

"So has Mary Ann Perkins."

I turned to him with a look of inquiry.

"God put the slant on the hills an' Mary Ann put the slant on the folks and done it proper," he added. "She's purty nigh a full-sized womern—Mary Ann is."

"What did she do?" I asked.

"Well, sir, for one thing, she married me. Maybe you think that ain't much to do, but you don't know me. Since America discovered Columbus nobody has ever tackled a job like that. I was what you might call an unexplored region when Mary Ann set foot on me—a kind of a wild, desert waste layin' idle. She conquered the savages. Then she smoothed an' sowed an' planted me. Kept me so busy I didn't have time for any more wild oats. Work agreed with me. It was restful. I enjoyed it—prospered and grew healthy. Some o' the neighbors thought they'd work, seein' how it agreed with me. If a critter like me could be a man, they thought 'twas easy. One by one they quit foolin' an' begun to prosper. Ye know decency is about as ketchin' as deviltry. They got a new slant on 'em. Went in for improvements. Mary Ann started a church and built a new schoolhouse with a little library in it and became trustee o' the district and organized an improvement society and kind o' married the whole neighborhood, and you see what's happened."

FOR ages it had been a shiftless, diseased, improvident, drunken world. Its character and its personal appearance had changed very little in a thousand years. Sobriety was a lost art. The luxuries of comfort and conceit had been enjoyed only by its kings and captains. Suddenly Mary Ann Perkins arrived. She was Human Liberty. She married the Anglo-Saxon race. She was an exacting wife. She hated Ignorance and Dirt and would not live with Disease and Tyranny. So her good man began to clean and improve himself and his house and its setting. She insisted upon noble companionship and better conditions of life. Suddenly it would seem that the gift of magic had come to him. He waved a wand and swift, incredible enchantments followed. His wand was the gift of invention. He prospered. The whole neighborhood of nations followed his example. What changes were wrought in this great home of man! Never has it been so well furnished, so comfortable.

Industry became the bride of Invention. Their child is Modern Business. It has been immeasurably successful. Naturally Business has acquired a vast conceit of itself, the fruits of which have been too abundant. With them I concern myself.

I hold no brief for rich or poor. I do not complain of the large and often oppressive operations of Modern Business. They have been, in the main, a civilizing force. I have no prejudice against the great Captains of Industry. They have been, mostly, generous and fair-minded. In spite of all the clamor, I think, as a rule, they have been just to those who have labored in their pay.

Neither the service nor the great problems of the millionaire have been quite appreciated. Nevertheless, many controllers of wealth stand convicted of a most grievous error, not by social or political philosophers, but by the history of modern life. The most important parts of the plant of the successful man are his intellect and spirit. These often he has grossly mismanaged. He may say and think that this is a matter which concerns himself alone. But it isn't. The security of his life and goods and of all things dear to God and man depends largely on the conduct of these invisible parts of his plant.

I SAW a young lady on Fifth Avenue the other day leading a dog with a jeweled collar. I didn't blame the dog. He was a useful dog, a symbolic and significant dog. I never saw a better bit of advertising. One knew at a glance what was on both ends of the leash.

It is a dog in better company, but one of the same breed, which has followed the progress of transportation like a shadow, beginning with the public road and the stage-coach. By and by some prosperous

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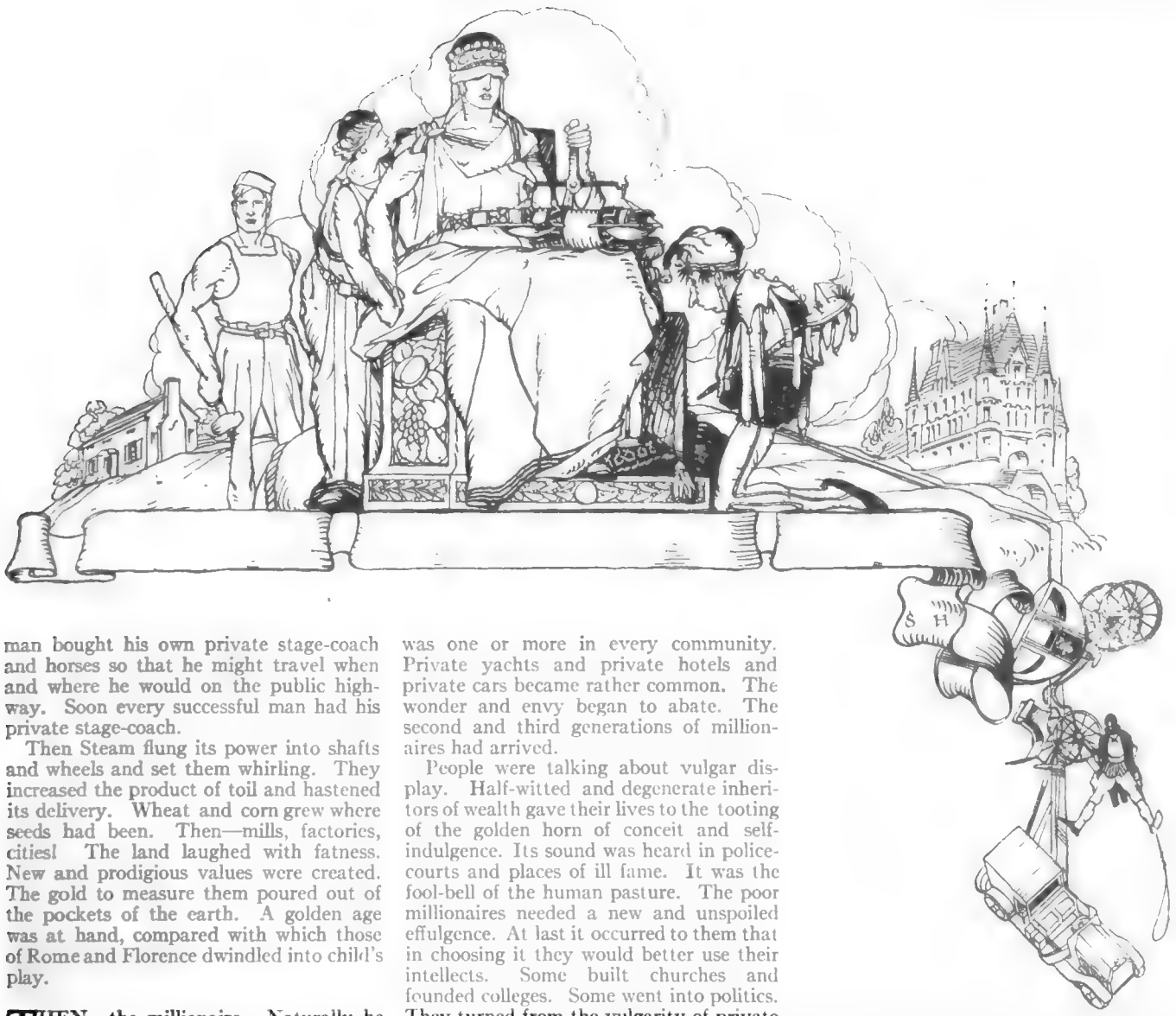

man bought his own private stage-coach and horses so that he might travel when and where he would on the public highway. Soon every successful man had his private stage-coach.

Then Steam flung its power into shafts and wheels and set them whirling. They increased the product of toil and hastened its delivery. Wheat and corn grew where seeds had been. Then—mills, factories, cities! The land laughed with fatness. New and prodigious values were created. The gold to measure them poured out of the pockets of the earth. A golden age was at hand, compared with which those of Rome and Florence dwindled into child's play.

THEN—the millionaire. Naturally he began to consider what special enjoyments he could provide for himself and family. First, he bought a more luxurious coach and handsomer and swifter horses than his neighbors could afford. Then he hired an apartment *de luxe* on the steamboat and shared a parlor-car with other rich men when he traveled by rail. But these pleasures were not special enough for his taste. There were too many sharing them. He wanted private accommodations which would excite the wonder and envy of his neighbors. He did not stop to consider whether the wonder and envy of his neighbors were likely to be useful to him. He was getting spoiled by overindulgence, and wonder and envy looked good to him at first sight. He began to live apart in a kind of regal loneliness. He bought him a private railroad-car and a private steamboat and built him a house that was like a great private hotel.

The currents of trade, flowing with unexampled swiftness under the new urge of steam and electricity, were bringing wealth from far and near and heaping it into hills and mountains. On the top of each sat a little king watching the progress of his own exaltation while showers of barbaric gold and treasure fell around him. Thousands of millionaires were looking down from these golden mountains in America, England, France and Germany. There was one or more in every community. Private yachts and private hotels and private cars became rather common. The wonder and envy began to abate. The second and third generations of millionaires had arrived.

People were talking about vulgar display. Half-witted and degenerate inheritors of wealth gave their lives to the tooting of the golden horn of conceit and self-indulgence. Its sound was heard in police-courts and places of ill fame. It was the fool-bell of the human pasture. The poor millionaires needed a new and unspoiled effulgence. At last it occurred to them that in choosing it they would better use their intellects. Some built churches and founded colleges. Some went into politics. They turned from the vulgarity of private splendors. They experimented with private legislatures. A few acquired them and the dishonors related thereto. Up to this, society had little cause for complaint in the conduct of its wealthy members. Their luxuries had done little harm, while their generosity and genius for organization had made large contributions to the general welfare. The private legislature was across the boundary of good morals and democracy. It was in the little kingdom of The-Public-be-Damned.

NOW before the kings of the golden mountains began to stir the political porridge and boost the intellect of the nations, many of them had taken a most vital and unfortunate step. It was a natural step, and, after all, they were only human. Great success had led to vast conceit. This conceit was a flaw in the crowbar of their uplift. It cracked. They and their children had enjoyed superior advantages for learning and observation. Their superior judgment had been triumphantly vindicated. Were they not, therefore, entitled to a superior religion—a better one than that of the crowd? The religion of the crowd was noisy and uncomfortable. It had, for them, a worn and battered look. There was no flavor of luxury about it. It put them under orders like a servant—they who had got the king-and-master habit and were wont to be obeyed. So many of them acquired a private code of morals and the very last word in luxury—a private god.

These gods of the modern Olympus are not so self-willed as those of the pagan world. The great peculiarity of the private god is this: He obeys his maker. He is under perfect control. He is a flexible, boneless creature. The men of many private possessions are in great peril of private gods. In the nature of things they become unwilling to walk humbly and to indulge in that strange and neglected art of winning the love of a neighbor—particularly if the neighbor is rather dirty and depraved. They'll build schools and hospitals for him and the like, but they'll leave the loving of him to others. Often they do not even know their neighbors.

LET me not be misunderstood. There are many rich men whose wisdom has not been drowned in conceit—many who have no need of private gods—but one might as well look for the average millionaire in the passenger-coach or on the street-car as in that ancient caravan of Christ's Democracy which has been traveling through the ages since the Birth in Bethlehem.

All over the world they were, mainly, out of sympathy with the church. I make

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no complaint of that, either, holding no brief for the church. But they rode over the hills on Sunday with horses and hounds; they exercised their bodies—a good thing to do. Many of them whirled the roulette-wheel; they gambled for large sums; they studied and practised the arts of idleness. They had traveled and observed the delights of the idle in all lands. They imported strange and beautiful varieties of fire-water that awoke the sleeping divinities of joy and passion. They practised lewd dances. They were flaunting in the faces of the people a kind of moral outlawry.

Now we come to the darkest part of this little history. The home of the millionaire is a center of fashion. It sets the pace, in a way, for the community in which it stands. It is the court circle. Life is mostly imitation. The life of the great country house is soon reflected in that of the lesser ones that surround it. Not only its life, but its spirit, its disrespect for law.

IT is thus that the private joys of the rich become public menace. Have we not observed how the arts of idleness and self-indulgence, the libidinous dances, have spread over the world? Why do rich men and the children of rich men have so many marriages, so little happiness—so few, so very few accomplishments worth having, as a rule? Why are the statistics of vice in certain communities so appalling?

I can imagine that some of you have been thinking of the immeasurable charities of the rich, of the hospitals, schools and colleges and libraries and playgrounds. I agree that their giving has been worthy of all praise, but they have not given themselves and their children. It has been wholesale, long-distance charity. At least once a week they must come down into the ranks and touch elbows with their neighbors on a common footing. The warm heart, the sympathetic hand, the kind word in season are more than meat or money. The great need of the rich man is to keep his hand active in retail kindness.

Lincoln one day saw a young woman standing in front of her father's house, crying.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I have to take the train and the wagon hasn't come for my trunk," she said.

Lincoln went into the house and got the trunk and carried it on his back to the station. This kind of retail, face-to-face, hand-to-hand kindness endeared him to the people of Illinois; indeed, it made him the most beloved figure in modern history.

Is any millionaire of to-day too good, too splendid, too high and mighty to follow the example of the greatest man America has known? The remedy for all the misunderstanding and bitterness between rich and poor is in one word—democracy. One dollar in face-to-face kindness is better than a hundred dollars which have grown cold with travel.

But the rich men were not the only possessors of that conceit which demands a god of its own. The multiplications of colleges had done much for the world, but had also produced a new variety of conceit and arrogance in the intellectual plutocrat, in the millionaire of learning who was looking down from the cold and lonely summit of the highbrow. It would seem that many of them had learned everything but wisdom, everything save these facts—that the sum of all knowledge can take one but a little way; that the greatest intellects the world has known have been the most humble; that an education that leads not to self-distrust has failed. There is nothing so pestiferous as this ignorance of the learned.

No man is wise or quite honest whose accomplishments have not led to this confession: "I am very weak and little and prone to error, but what I am, all the world is welcome to know, and especially this fact about me—that I am trying to be more humble and therefore kinder."

The flexible, india-rubber god of luxury is the love of the modern Olympus. The worst of his brood is Mammon—the god of the would-be millionaire, not the god of wealth. He is the god of cupidity—the god of the profiteer. Nowhere is he so base and offensive as in the fiction of our times—the fictions of the stage and the book.

These time-honored agencies of the human spirit are being turned into schools of degeneracy out of which floods of vile suggestion are poured into the public mind. The moving-picture is largely controlled by Mammon. It is the greatest moral menace since the dawn of the Christian era because it reaches the tender soul of childhood with its own language—that of pictures—and gives it a false impression of the salient facts of life—which are not robbery, murder, drunkenness, lust and seduction—not yet.

The world is much indebted to wealth and learning, albeit they have led to the creation of private gods—more gods, indeed, than Pericles or Julius Cæsar knew. But no form of conceit is so alarming and so frankly degenerate as that of Beauty—Beauty that throws aside the bridle of shame and makes a vain display of its most suggestive accessories.

Young women, middle-aged women, old women, plain women, even poor women are aping this devilish fashion of display which their wealthy neighbors have set for them. Does not the beautiful young woman, of whom we see so much at the ball, remind you a little of Herodias at the birthday party of Antipas? Quite innocently and playfully, let us hope, but in effect is she not asking that the head of Civilization itself be brought in on a charger and that we return to the morals of the jungle? Without clean women there can be no civilization.

THESE expressions of egoism had been going on almost a quarter of a century in France, England, Italy, Germany and America. Suddenly the king of all the kings appeared.

He was richer than most of them. He had more power than all of them put together. He had grown out of the same roots of idleness, conceit and self-indulgence. He had seventy million employees—think of that! His enjoyments were as private as those of an octopus. He had his own private army and navy, his own churches and colleges. He trained a corps of private historians and philosophers, he bribed priests and suborned prophets with his money, and frightened honest men into silence with his power. Thus he began to teach his seventy million employees that might was right.

Incidentally his hired men taught that he—William II. of Germany—was the greatest man living. He agreed with them. His conceit was like that of the little kings of the golden mountains, but greater. Many of the little kings had been teaching in a small way the thing that William taught in a large way—that might *is* right and that the old morals were for the unsuccessful.

By and by William decided that he would have the earth for his own private world—a kind of private yacht sailing the infinite deep with every one thrown overboard or hustled into the fo'castle save those who wanted him for captain. Human conceit and selfishness had come to their logical and prodigious climax in this man. We hated him and all that he stood for, but let us not forget that he was the consummation of the tendencies of modern life, of its greed and selfishness—that he was the perfect flower of all the private god-holders. The last rung in the ladder of conceit and self-indulgence had lifted him above the crowd and the spirit of democracy.

For long he had been sowing the seed of that hatred which we feel. Then came the years of reaping in vindication of the one God who, it would seem, will have no other gods before Him; then came the bloody years against whose darkness we now read the shining legend: "Thou shalt not forget the law." Out of the silence of twenty million graves the blood of the slain cries out to the living: "Thou shalt not frown upon thy neighbor or live apart in ignorance of his needs or misuse him or seek to cry him down with your degeneracy and turn his heart into a den of leopards."

NOW are we not face to face with the great lesson of the war? Every man who builds a private god and lives with little care for his neighbors and regards his misbehavior as his own business is a little William and a peril to the world.

Civilization is founded on the intelligence and virtues of the common folk. We must build up and protect these sacred things or democracy will go down the path of darkness and ruin. Those who stand in high places, crowned with success, are the leaders and exemplars of the crowd—keepers of the great treasure.

Now, too, we are face to face with the fundamental ideal of American democracy. It is no new discovery. It is very old and yet the divinity that dwells in it groweth not old nor can it be slain in battles. It is nothing more nor less than the love of men which leads to education and respect for justice and good-will and honor in all and for all.

I would like to see a legend to this effect in every study wall in the land:

Remember, oh, young man, in the days of your youth remember that there is one thing vastly greater than any individual can hope to be. It is the spirit of man endowed with the wisdom of the innumerable dead and expressing itself in the civil and moral law. The degree of a man's respect for that law has been and ever will be the test of his mental soundness. Remember, too, that while it is a pleasant thing to have power and riches, this world has never seen so hard a master.

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The Arrangements Committee halted at a street corner and fell into an argument.

Dictated—But Not Red

A Three-Part Story

By Leavitt Ashley Knight

VIII

Wherein Destiny Presses the Button.

IRA read the letter a second time, and darted backward across the years to a rambling white house on a fair hill-crest beneath four mighty oaks. He was a little boy again. A dinner-bell clanged. He scampered in to ginger cookies piping hot out of grandma's oven, flaky slices of whitest chicken breast flanked with ruby mountains of currant jelly. Grape jam to the left of him, sweet pickles to the right of him, and nobody to volley and thunder against eating his fill!

"Great days!" the orator breathed. "And the farm mine! And I never thought it'd come to me. Ezra and I never got along well. By the great God in Heaven!"

His jaw dropped, and he stopped breathing.

"I win!" he whispered hoarsely. "A big rich farm. A housekeeper. Fifteen hundred cash. I am the leader of the Second American Revolution! Sophie!"

He flung himself on the cot and beat the pillow. The triumphal march of Destiny went roaring through him. The hordes of plutocracy were crushed! The spirit of Progress had chosen Ira M. Cummins to do the crushing! It commanded him to return to the home of his ancestors. There no landladies and no bill-collectors can harass you, no plutocrats intrude upon your splendid solitude. You will write your addresses in the quiet west parlor—a pot of tea at your elbow. You will summon your workers from all over the land. Knob Hill will become the Mount Vernon of the Second American Revolution. A place of pilgrimages for those who love the Common People. There, at your grandfather's old cherrywood desk, you will dictate the Declaration of Independence for Mankind. A stroke of your pen, and the mighty plains, the pleasant vales, shall be divided among the suffering millions of downtrodden. A hundred years later, and multitudes will throng to this historic place. They will stand with reverent uncovered heads at the foot of a towering monument, a severe affair in simple granite, erected to the memory of Ira M. Cummins, Liberator of the World!

The titanic vision was too much. He sobbed and sputtered into his pillow, deaf to the renewed rapping upon his door.

"Are you sick, Mr. Cummins?" the thickish female voice inquired.

Ira made no reply. All that free advertising he had received during the past five days! Now he would cash in on it! Seizing a dainty Malacca cane from a corner, he popped his priceless Panama on his head and sauntered forth.

A corpulent female in a mottled wrapper awaited him with a sinister scowl.

"Good morning, Mrs. Flaherty," Ira nodded. "By the way, I am returning to my country home this week. My visit to

SYNOPSIS

THE story opens with a Bolshevist meeting in Union Square, which is held to celebrate the release from arrest of Ira M. Cummins, the brilliant young Red orator, Man of Mystery. Nothing more than his name is known of Cummins, although his dress and bearing have gained him the reputation of a man of wealth. He is, in reality, a farm boy who came to town, with a capital of three hundred dollars lent him by little Martha Mattison, to found a school of oratory. He is now a haberdasher's salesman. The Reds, Ivan Morgolsky, George Burin and the beautiful Sophie Delatour, are trying to get Cummins into their clutches, capitalize his free advertising, and make him leader of the Revolution. Sophie accompanies him to the Plaza, where he says he lives, but where he escapes her. He secures a donation to the Cause from his rich young friend Trevison, "the Bituminous Boob," who is anxious to meet Sophie. He then goes secretly to his cheap boarding-house, where he receives at the same time "notice" from his landlady, and a letter from his uncle making him a present of the farm.

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New York is over. You may rent the room. I'll send my valet for my things.

"There you are." Ira whipped her a bill. "Just mail my receipt. Knob Hill is my place. At Pillsburg."

He lingered an instant to gloat over the fat soul's bewilderment. Then down-stairs, three steps at a stretch, whistling, to the front door. The bill-collector awaited him there. He repeated the act, this time with forty-six dollars, and added: "Of course I don't blame you, my poor fellow. You have to do this dirty business or starve. You're a wage slave."

He whisked into a cigar-store and telephoned to Sophie.

"Good morning, comrade!" he sang. "I've decided to go ahead with—you know. The big plan. I want you to tell Burin to come at once to—hm—make it my Fifth Avenue office, Bowes & Cravath, you know. Ground floor. Now don't forget our luncheon at Berrillon's."

"Oh, comrade! This is too, too good," Sophie gasped. "I'm dreaming, surely! But a weeny-teeny favor——"

"Forty-'leven of them," chuckled Ira.

"Please let me bring Burin over to you."

"Why — er — certainly." Ira laughed, puzzled. "Awfully glad to see you—sooner the better."

"That's so nice of you," she purred back. "I'll run right along after him."

A faint fever of noble passion flushed his pale cheeks. "She adores me," his lips confessed to his heart. "She adores me. The glorious creature! I shall be worthy of her—as she is worthy of me."

He scarcely saw where he was going, so vivid the vision of her. Those unfathomable eyes! A dark glory, a night full of whispers, a thin curtain over a cavern of passions, a signal of messages the tongue dares not utter! The touch of those firm satin hands of hers tingled up and down his arm. It, too, signaled thoughts that were better not spoken. What life! What leaping, throbbing energy! What matchless beauty! Truly, that same Destiny that had blessed him with the gift of eloquence, that had saved him from the trenches of France by clothing his bones in a mere veil of skin, that had moved Uncle Ezra to make him a rich and free man, yes, that very same Destiny had guided this perfect woman to him.

Half of the common people were women. So there must be, under the great leader of the Second American Revolution, a noble woman who could receive from him the brilliant inspirations and transmit them to the feminine half of the common people in a simple manner suited to the simple minds of the dear creatures.

How delicately, yet how vigorously, Sophie would do all that! How eagerly would she drink in wisdom from his lips! Ah! How overflowing with joy their days would be!

The only too familiar whiff of stews and chicory and soap-suds jerked him back to the day and hour. He stood before his usual quick lunch.

"Bah! I can't eat here! Not on this day!" he exclaimed. "It'd be sacrilege! I'm going to have a real eat!"

A real eat! He hadn't had one since his last Thanksgiving dinner at Uncle Ezra's. And ever since then, ugh! Five-dollar boarding-houses, a ghastly succession of thin bean soup, aged prunes, weak coffee, soggy cake.

A doctor had told him that his skinniness came from those boarding-houses. He noticed how listless he was after eating the terrible food. He could not think brilliantly. He lost hope in himself, in the world, in the Cause, in Human Progress. The spirit of revolt in him was crushed. Why must all boarding-houses pass out such paralyzing provender? Wasn't that part of the same dark conspiracy to keep the masses in bondage? Dull the toiler's mind with soggy bread and boiled tea and quick-lunch mince-pie, and he will never find the mental energy to strike off his shackles. Usually he will wash out the taste of the vile diet with strong drink, and sink deeper into the mire of Wage Slavery.

"In the Second American Revolution," said Ira, as he headed for Broadway's Best Beefsteak Dive, "we shall compel the swell hotels to serve their regular food at boarding-house rates."

He felt of his tendonous arm. "If I had been rich," he mused, "I might have eaten porterhouse steaks every day. I might have put on flesh. I might have been drafted into the army. I might now be a moldering remnant of humanity somewhere under French sod! How marvelous are the workings of Providence!"

IX

Wherein Our Dictator Reveals His Past and Future.

BREAKFAST finished in eight courses, the leader of the Second American Revolution struck out briskly toward Fifth Avenue. He came at length to an establishment which made known its purpose in life through two windows, containing, against a background of exquisitely paneled Circassian walnut, four marvelous cravats. No vulgar price-tag. No unseemly boasting as to quality or price. Evident indeed it was that all who passed through the heavy bronze door emblazoned with the firm name, Bowes & Cravath, never stopped to consider such petty trifles as prices.

Ira sauntered in, swinging his Malacca a trifle more jauntily than ever. A youth dressed astonishingly like him looked up from behind a show-case, stared, and whispered in a fright: "There's some terrible thugs waiting for you in Bowes's office. Get them out before Bowes comes, please!"

Cummins scowled. Bill-collectors! Well, he'd stagger the vampires! He stalked back to the magnificent private room in the rear and crashed in—upon his Arrangements Committee. Sophie was radiant, Burin fidgetty with excitement and unbelief, Morgolsky in a sodden hangover.

Ira rested his knuckles lightly on old Bowes's desk and struck a splendid diapason. "Comrades," said he, "the time has come for me to drop the mask. Till now, for reasons of my own, I have carried on my work in the dark. But from this day forth I shall toil in the open. I shall break all my plutocratic connections, and to prepare for the coming fight I shall retire for a little while to my country estate, where I shall write addresses and confer with my committees——"

"There wasn't a word about you in this morning's papers," Burin broke in sweetly. "I'm afraid of this move of yours—that is, unless you give me full power to shove your local publicity while you're away——"

"Yes, indeed!" Sophie cried. "We've simply got to keep you before the public every minute—or lose that half million of free advertising. If you'll give me—hm—well, perhaps three or four hundred dollars, comrade, I'll print thousands of copies of your big speech last night. I'll have the proofs for you to run through at luncheon."

There lurked in those baffling eyes of hers a ghostly beggar stretching forth a ghostly palm. Ira did not hear the faint sneering laugh from Burin. He was lost in the jungles of arithmetic. He tried to compute the size of his remaining roll. Landlady, bill-collectors, swell breakfast, phone calls—what else? And as he delayed, the room tingled with suspense.

He finally caught his stride. "Why, certainly—if I happen to have that with me." Then out came the roll, and off of it came all of it, except two twenties. "Now, as I propose that we raise a quarter million, we owe it to our contributors to run regular accounts. Another point, too! I feel my personal responsibility in this great enterprise. I can not allow my name to be connected with any acts or utterances which I have not most explicitly approved. So I ask you all, my good friends, not to write letters or make speeches or print any circulars without first submitting them to me for inspection and approval——"

"But—but—" Morgolsky was sputtering. "This is censorship! Like the old Czar! It must not be, comrade. We are all free and equal. Each does as he pleases. And all share equally in the success of all——"

"Oh, shut up!" Burin rasped. "This isn't Russia. It's Fifth Avenue. Mr. Cummins wants results, and we're going to get them from him."

But Morgolsky whined, while Sophie sweetly tucked the three hundred dollars in her handbag, and wrote down her leader's country address.

"Knob Hill," she murmured. "Odd name. Is it a big place?"

"Pooh!" Ira was very modest—like the billionaire who can afford to wear a dollar shirt. "A simple little nook. Scarcely a mile long——"

"A mile long? Oh, you're joshing me." She was vexed.

"But it is." He laughed as he suddenly divined that she was a true New-Yorker, in the atlas of whose mind one twenty-foot lot equals one cold-water tenement; three cold-water tenements equal one landlord; five landlords equal one slum block; and five slum blocks equal one multimillionaire. "I'll have you all up there very soon—got to get the house and grounds in order for the summer first, you know—awful nuisance! And it's hard to get good farm and house servants these days, too! Well, good-by for a week or so, Burin! Push the campaign fund hard! Sophie, I'll see you at luncheon sure. Ta! Ta!"

The Arrangements Committee was bewildered. Its leader lost his oratorical manner. He rushed his words badly. He rushed his comrades even worse. He fairly pushed them to the front door and out of it, as if the place were on fire. They had many things to talk about, but he didn't give them a chance to get a word in. But then, they had not noticed

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"Ira! My, I'm glad to see you!"

what Ira had. They had not seen a limousine pull up at the curb. Nor had they watched, as Ira had, while a fattish champagne-hued gentleman alighted and moved soggily toward the shop.

The clerks were scurrying frantically to their places as Ira waved his committee out upon the pavement and deftly stepped aside for the gentleman to pass in.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Bowes!" Ira tossed a sweet gesture at him.

Mr. Bowes glared. But the leader of the Second American Revolution did not wither. He contemplated the committee with fatherly joy as it wended its way down the avenue.

If Ira M. Cummins had been possessed of a micro-telephone at this moment in his meteoric career, how differently the course of events might have been! He observed his Arrangements Committee halt at a street corner a hundred yards off and fall into an argument. He did not hear their remarks. They would have interested him.

"Well," sneered Burin at Morgolsky, "you're a ripe little guesser, aren't you? With your tale about him being a cheapskate clerk!"

"I didn't guess it," Morgolsky snarled. "I got it straight from that cop Raggerty, who pinched the boy. He told me this very morning he was a necktie clerk."

"Well, quit scrapping about it," Sophie purled. "It's another joke on the bulls. Gee! An estate a mile long! He's a millionaire all right——"

"Four or five times over," Burin added. "Nobby office he's got. Keeps the whole shop on edge, too. Notice how everybody stood around as if they were scared of him?"

"Give me forty-two dollars, Sophie, my dear," Morgolsky whined. "That dog Lettkin at the café has got my watch, the watch my sainted father gave to me. I owe Lettkin forty-two dollars, and he won't give me the watch until I pay up——"

"You lie," Burin said calmly, "you lie. You owe Lettkin eighteen dollars. You told me so last night when you were drunk——"

"You charge the eighteen dollars to rent, Sophie," Morgolsky whimpered. "I hired that room last night for you to bring our leader to and you never brought him, and I am the money out, I am that!"

"That's more like it," Burin gleamed. "Let him have it."

"See here, you two!" Sophie flashed. "No more of that game. It's small potatoes. And, believe me, too many small potatoes spoil the ragout——"

"What's that?" Burin scowled.

The girl tossed her head. "You fellows are tin-horns. You simply can't come at a big proposition in a big way. Ira Cummins is a coming man. I bank on him. He's the first tame capitalist we ever tied up with. Lord! He's all-round clever. And he's a business man—look at the way he's making us sign receipts and keep accounts and show him proofs for his O. K.! If you fellows think you can pay off Morgolsky's booze bills with Cummins's money, you're a pair of clams. He's going to check up on us to the last cent—at least until he's convinced that we've made good. And I'm going to take my orders from him."

"Dear *Maedel!* What you are saying!" Morgolsky wrung his fat, pulpy hands. "And after all I have done for you? Those lovely dresses I bought you, *Maedel!* And——"

"I suppose you sent the bill for those dresses to your dear comrades back in Moscow, eh?" Burin wrinkled a scornful nose. "You fool! The girl's right. But

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let's get one thing straight, Sophie. You cut me out this morning very sweetly, you did——"

"Why! What do you mean?" Sophie's eyes widened.

"Pooh!" Burin patted her shoulder in a fatherly way. "Little one! Don't play horse with papa! You know I've been running the money end of this business ever since you and I got in it. You know that I have been coaching Cummins all these weeks. I found him, I made him. And I'm not going to be cut out. I'm going to make him the greatest Red Leader in the world——"

"And you're going to do it by paying Morgolsky's old booze bills?" Sophie's laughter lashed the man raw. "Oh, Burin! Now hereafter you and I are to team up on a sound basis—you'll do the planning and I'll do the spending——"

"Witness that, Morgolsky!" Burin shouted. "I take her up!"

"My poor watch!" Morgolsky was mopping an alcoholic eye. "My dear dead father will haunt me for letting that wolf Lettkin get it. Ah! I should never have come back to America——"

"Can your dear dead father!" Burin rasped. "You heard what Sophie said——"

"You two think you will do all the planning and spending. You do not know Cummins. He runs everything he touches. I see it in him."

"Cummins *is* a little too sharp." Burin scowled. "Look at those damned receipts he insists on! He's shifty as a welterweight, too. Takes advantage of every opening you give him. I've watched him do that many a night on the soap-box. Got wooden nutmeg Yankee in him, I'll bet."

"I wonder!" mused Sophie. "Now I wonder if he——"

"What?" Burin demanded.

"Oh, nothing." She smiled at the avenue.

And the committee wandered on to Ipkin, the printer.

X

Wherein the Bituminous Boob is Inflamed with the Holy Fire of Revolution.

IRA reentered the haberdashery, humming cheerily, there to encounter the blazing eyes of old Bowes.

"Out of here, you young dead-beat! You soap-box scum!" The gentleman frothed. "I've heard all about you——"

"You have still something to hear." The orator bowed exquisitely. "Bah! You sodden plutocrat! Bah!"

And with that he reached out and tweaked old Bowes's nose with such vehemence that the haberdasher yelped. Cummins blew a kiss at him and drifted out into Fifth Avenue. Ahead of him the alabaster precipices of the Plaza gleamed at him.

"H'm," he mused. "I think I'd better drop in on Trevison."

The Bituminous Boob dragged the leader of the Second American Revolution to a divan, as a jovial mastiff might have done with a favorite bone.

"I was hoping you'd drop in." Bituminous slapped Ira's knee. "Say! What a dame she is!"

Ira was puzzled. "Who's that you're talking about?"

"Who? Why, the woman you sent me to shoo away last night. Good Lord! I wish somebody like her would be that anxious to see me." Bituminous sighed profoundly. "Say! who is she?"

Ira laughed; his mind leaped to the task of managing Trevison. Sophie might make a good lead. Anyhow, he'd try her out.

"Oh, Miss Delatour?" he breezed. "Why, she's my secretary."

"Your— Oho! You grand little josher!" Trevison haw-hawed.

Ira paused, in accordance with the rules of oratorical suspense as laid down in Chapter 7 of "The First Principles of Elocution." He arose, clasped his thin hands behind him, and bowing his noble head slightly, strode at a funeral pace up and down the vast luxurious room, while Bituminous gaped.

"Trevison," Ira intoned, "I have been deceiving you—for a high purpose. You have supposed me to be a lowly necktie-clerk. And I have allowed you to believe that for a reason."

Second suspense. Slow inhalation. Four strides left, four right. Bituminous wasn't used to it. He moistened his lips and gulped. Then Cummins cut loose the torrents of his eloquence in a masterly confession.

It was a moving picture, leaping with dramatic action from place to place, from triumph to triumph. Bituminous heard how a mere boy in a small village up State had divined what was wrong with this dreary old world, and had consecrated his life to stamping out plutocracy. Fortunately he had been born in a family of considerable means—nothing like Trevison's family, of course, but pretty well fixed—and thus he was able to devote years to a profound study of the evils of great wealth. To get the point of view of the downtrodden millions, he had forsaken his comfortable home and had made himself one of them. After years of observation he was now retiring to his estates, to write up his discoveries and to launch an attack against the citadel of Mammon. He was going to found a great party of common people. The old party lines, Republican, Democrat, Socialist, Prohibition, would all be erased.

It was magnificent. Bituminous was overwhelmed. When he caught his breath, he gasped: "Gosh! So that's why you've got such a stunner of a secretary!"

Ira surveyed him with unspeakable disgust. What a Bituminous Boob the fellow was! He groped for words to convey his contempt and found none. The next instant he was glad that he couldn't find them. For a fresh brilliant lead flashed upon him.

"Trevison," said he, "these are solemn days. The world is in ferment. Titanic forces of evil are loose in our midst. No man who holds Freedom and Human Rights in high esteem can fritter away his precious hours in roof-gardens and hotel bars while the world is crying for help."

"I know I ought to be something," Bituminous groaned like a wretch caught in the act of stealing change from a blind beggar. "This life I'm leading is horribly pointless. I've told you that a hundred times——"

"And now I'll tell you, just once, never twice," said Ira, "what you can do to be saved from yourself. I speak to you as one gentleman of leisure and wealth to another——"

"Ira!" Bituminous thumped. "If you'll find something serious for me to do—that is, something that I *can* do—I'll do anything in the world for you."

"Do you mean precisely what you say?" Ira fixed his burning eye on the youth.

"I do! I do!" Bituminous raised his voice to concert pitch. "I'll do any serious work, Ira—not the sort they put me at when I volunteered for the Red Cross Drive—addressing envelopes, that was. It must take me around to mix with folks—nice folks—like your secretary."

"Trevison!" said Ira. "You may start work to-day."

"What at?" Trevison cried.

"Miss Delatour will need several enthusiastic helpers in our campaign," explained Ira. "We're going to raise a quarter-million. We shall meet with stubborn opposition. It's no luncheon club that I'm inviting you to join. It's tremendously serious and hard. More like the Catholic Church, or the Masons, or the U. S. Steel Company, you know. Get the idea? Enormous organization. Vast plans. Constructive work——"

"I see," said Bituminous in a manner one might expect a blind man to use the verb.

"I hoped you would," Ira beamed. "It shows you've got sound judgment. Some people never can comprehend that every great Cause must be fought out through blood and tears——"

"Say, Ira!" Bituminous started. "You aren't going to kill people, are you? I— I wouldn't care to go in for anything like that."

"We may kill ourselves from overwork." Ira looked far away into the perilous future.

"It'll be bully good fun working for Miss Delatour," Bituminous breathed softly. "She's a dream——"

"You'll work *under* her," corrected Ira. "But you'll be working *for* me. This vast campaign is a product of my brain. I am the leader. Understand that clearly at the outset. Misunderstandings are such a nuisance, don't you think so? By the way, Trevison, do you suppose you could get some influential people to chip in a little for our fund? Do you think you've enough personal magnetism and energy?"

"Is it very hard?" Bituminous asked.

Well," Ira spoke with extreme moderation. "Well, yesterday I collected four hundred and twenty dollars."

"You little son of a gun!" Trevison gaped. "How did you do it? How much do you ask a chap for? And what do you say?"

"I never ask any intelligent and well-meaning man for any particular amount, my boy. It's best to leave the size of a contribution to each person's judgment and his conscience. What one can give depends so much, not merely upon the interest one has in a cause, but still more upon one's financial condition. You know, like the widow's mite in the Bible, the mite that was more blessed to give than to receive. A poor man gives his little. On the other hand, take a chap worth millions, and I'd expect from him a much larger gift. I wouldn't say how large it ought to be. That's his affair, not mine. Get the idea?"

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"I appoint you Business Manager of the Cause," Ira laughed happily.

Bituminous wagged his taffy-crowned head emphatically, and leaped across the room to a writing-table, from one of the drawers of which he produced a check-book. "I get it, Ira!" he chuckled. "Now, you'll let me work with Miss Delatour, honest, cross your heart?"

"I order you to!" Ira smiled. "You're my private secretary. Don't forget last night! Ha! Ha! Well, private secretary, you stick on the job and I'll promote you to be her assistant!"

Trevison thoughtfully opened his check-book, while the orator struggled to look indifferently out of the window.

"Old scout," said the Bituminous Boob, "would you mind telling me how large your largest contribution is up to date?"

"Twenty-two thousand dollars. But it came from a very dear relative of mine—and of course you can hardly expect outsiders to compete with members of my family."

"No, of course not," Trevison mused. "And I'm a little low with ready cash, too. But—I'll make it five thousand dollars, Ira. My lawyers said I ought to be making contributions to some fashionable Cause. There you are! Now, when do I report to Miss Delatour?"

Ira stared at the check. Through the thunder of arterial blood in his ears he scarcely heard that closing query.

"W-what's the matter, Ira?" It was Trevison, quavering slightly. "Isn't that enough?"

Ira shook himself. "Why—yes, thanks. Certainly," he mumbled, and thrust the check into a vest pocket. "I was just thinking—what you'd better take up first——"

"Perhaps Miss Delatour can advise me as to that," Bituminous hinted.

"I dare say she can!" Ira came to earth with a thud. "By George! I must meet her at Berrillon's at one o'clock. Here it is after twelve, too——"

"If you're likely to be late, Ira, I'd be glad to go to Berrillon's at one and explain to her——"

"Awfully good of you, Trevison." Ira cooled briskly. "But you'd better get busy at the campaign fund. The minutes are golden now, my boy. Probably you won't raise much at your first try. Your friends won't be sympathetic——"

"I haven't any friends in New York."

"Oh, you must know somebody," Ira insisted. "You've met a lot of people around at the hotels."

"Y-yes," Bituminous scratched his head. "I'm afraid most of them don't remember me very well, though."

"Well, my boy," Ira cheered him, "never mind them. Wait until Sophie gets up some lists of people for you to call on. Now I must be toddling along. See you after luncheon surely."

XI

The Better Half of the Human Race is Admitted to the Revolution.

IRA took a taxi back to his room, packed his few belongings, then hurried to a bank, and announcing himself as a new depositor, turned in Trevison's big check and a dozen little ones from loving admirers.

Five minutes later he was leaning across a table behind Berrillon's densest palms, his gaze upon the Woman of Destiny.

She was dreamily looking over his shoulder, as he lost himself in the deep, caverns of passion whose portals were her lustrous pupils. Her odd little evasion of his glance emboldened him the more to plumb those soul depths. She seemed struggling to keep hidden the maidenly desires that were stretching out their hands toward Life, in the darkness of her spirit.

"You Woman of Destiny!" he breathed warmly. And, as he leaned farther toward her, his hand pressed against the brand-new bank-book in his inside pocket. A fresh wave of power made him tingle.

"Ah! You have felt that way, too?" She laid a hand on her satin breast and caught her breath. Her whole body throbbed suddenly. "They're the very words that have run through my head—sometimes I thought I was going mad.

"What do you mean?" he whispered.

Her face became a fierce flame of hunger. "These last five weeks," she stammered. "They've been one long strange dream. Everything seemed to be going wrongly, you know. And then—you came. And, oh comrade! You've changed everything so! Ever since yesterday I've been saying to myself that Destiny has something great in store for me——"

The waiter glided up with the menu-cards. Sophie called for a Martini.

"And yours?" she smiled tenderly.

"I don't care for any," he shook his head. "I never touch alcohol. It's bad

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for one's speaking voice. Very!" And he launched upon the physiology and pathology of the human larynx, with particular reference to certain thickening of the glottis induced by the flowing bowl.

"Every day you surprise me, comrade," declared the girl. "You're the very first man I've ever known who doesn't drink. I've come to expect astonishing things from you. One has to—from geniuses."

"You do really feel that I am different from all other men?" Ira inquired with bated breath.

She clasped her hands. Slowly, oh! so slowly, she delivered her thrilling reply: "You—oh! you are as different from other men as—as day from night!"

"As you are from the rest of women!" His thin hands stole across the table and captured hers. "Sophie! My comrade! My perfect mate! You have felt our mystic affinity, too! Oh! It is so clear to me! I see it in your dear blushes——"

"Ira!" Furiously she kissed him. "My destiny! Oh! It is too marvelous! I can't believe it yet! Don't wake me up, darling!"

"It is no dream, my own." Ira almost sobbed for joy. "It is Destiny. We have great deeds to do. Deeds that only you and I can consummate——"

"Yes, yes, dearest!" Once more she looked far away.

"The world must be saved," Ira went on passionately, as the waiter floated in with her Martini. "I shall be its savior, and you will be my mate, my heart companion in the mighty work——"

"To you, genius, savior, sweetheart!" She lifted her glass and drank the toast alone. She set the glass down, stroked her wealth of black, short hair, and flung a firm, round arm upon the table so that the fingers reached and played tenderly with her lover's coat-sleeve.

A SILENCE fell upon the pair. The intensity of their feelings had passed beyond mere words. The waiter brought soup. They went at it, Ira with a faint agitation, the girl in a delicious languor that betrayed her desire to prolong to its utmost this hour of ecstasy. An orchestra at the farther end of the restaurant struck up a passionate Hungarian rhapsody. The Woman of Destiny brought forth from her handbag a package of cigarets and held one lovingly up to her sweetheart's lips, while she placed another between her own. Sweetheart smiled and murmured that he never smoked; it was rather bad for one's speaking voice, and all the authorities on elocution declared against the habit. Sophie laughed as softly as a midsummer brook and said: "Foolish me! We must take the bestest, bestest care of the wonderful voice, mustn't we? And you'll let me begin taking care of it very soon, won't you, my own?" The lips of living ruby were very, very close to his.

"You mean—?" Ira vibrated.

"I mean—just that, dear." Sophie stroked his cheek. "The hours are too, too precious, to be wasted! I'm not the kind to sit back and wait, Ira darling! You can call the minister this very minute. I've spent so many years hoping against hope—now when my Prince comes, I can't leave him—not for a weeny-teeny minute! Dearest, I've a silly fear——"

"Tut! You mustn't!" Ira squeezed her hand.

"If we don't marry right away, we shall be false to our Destiny. It's in the papers. If you had delayed your campaign, you'd have lost the whole thing—the whole half-million dollars' worth. It's that way with our own lives and our happiness, too. We mustn't hold back. We must begin to-day to live together, think together, dream our splendid dreams together. We owe it to the Cause, Ira——"

She paused. The waiter appeared with the next course. Ira floated away on the wings of the Hungarian rhapsody—that is, all of him did except the exempt ninety-nine pounds of skin and bones. His mighty spirit took flight into the realm of Love. He was floating in a fleecy cloud that hovered like a protecting nimbus over and around his beloved. The cloud smelled something like the cigaret the beloved was smoking, but that didn't distress him appreciably. A fellow can't be too squeamish about nicotine, if his beloved uses it. And, after all, the authorities on elocution, did not forbid one smelling other people's smoke. No, the odor wasn't distressing.

BUT there was a real worry that slowly took shape. He hadn't a suitable home as yet for this matchless bride. The old farmhouse would require some little furnishing, of course. And there was Uncle Ezra, too. It might be only polite to give him some warning about the beloved and her coming to Knob Hill. And then Martha. She might not stay on as housekeeper if she had an extra person to look after. Servants are so uppish these days! Leaving on the flimsiest pretext. If Martha left without notice, it might be hard to pick up another servant.

"Darling girl!" he patted her wrist. "I know just how you feel. But——"

Then he explained that he was just opening his country place for the summer. There was considerable painting, also odd repair jobs; so it would be some weeks before he could have his nest put in order.

"Oh, but what do I mind if the place is that way?" she pouted. "All I want is you, dear. Just you. You can take me to any old shanty if you like. I won't even notice it—if you're around for me to see and kiss."

"My own!" Ira whispered. "I'm almost tempted to snatch you up and run off with you this very minute——"

"Call for Mistuh Cummins!" sang out a page.

"Here!" Ira raised an important finger, as if he had been expecting the President of the United States.

"Oh, bother! Send them away!"

"Why—er—" Ira stammered, but too late! Through the shrubbery stormed Trevison, grinning from ear to ear.

Ira glanced blackly at his watch. Impertinent—and yet, by George! Perhaps it was Destiny! Things were going a little too fast with Sophie. A little thought, a little delay might help!

"Gosh! Ira! I couldn't wait! Such grand news! I've found my place at last!" The Boob spread across the table a vast litter of ten and twenty-dollar bills, while he beamed at Sophie in frank worship.

"What's this?" Ira gaped.

"One hour's haul, old scout!" Trevison whooped. "Collection for the Cause! Oh! I'm a natural born assistant to you, Miss Delatour! I was hard put for contributions. Only chaps in sight were my auto agent, my garage man, my groom, the barkeeps at the six hotels where I hang out, the house detective, my tailor."

Ira laughed immoderately. "Trevison, you're a dandy. All this from those fellows?"

"Every cent of it. Nine hundred and eighty dollars. There you are, boss!" And he shoved the stack at Ira. Then to Sophie: "Boss says you'll have some lists for me to call on. Lead me to them! This is royal good fun. Easy picking—only some of the chaps josh me about being an anarchist. What do they mean, Ira?"

Sophie warbled, but her dangerous eyes analyzed the Bituminous Boob swiftly, and the analysis left her puzzled. "Really, you're a most unusual assistant," she commented. "I hope all my helpers will have their auto agents and grooms——"

"I trust that you will see that they do," Ira interposed. "I might say right here that we want with us only such men and women as have—er—some means and influential connections. Mr. Trevison has kindly volunteered his services to the Cause, Sophie. I'm going to entrust him to you. I think he ought to be given only the most important soliciting to do. He shows marked ability at that." And Ira, with one skilful sweep, annexed the nine hundred and eighty dollars.

"What is an anarchist anyhow, Ira?" Trevison persisted.

Ira suddenly whipped out his watch. "Good Heaven!" he cried. "My train leaves in forty minutes! With Trevison here, my dear, we'd better run over your plans. How about them?"

Away back in those wonderful eyes a Something loomed. Ira guessed that she resented the sudden shift of program. She wanted to settle the hour and place of their wedding. She may have noticed that Ira was a shade too eager to take advantage of Trevison's intrusion and evade the vital issue. How passionately she clenched her strong hands for one fleeting instant! Then of a sudden she was all graciousness again.

"Oh! I wish you could stay in town," she pouted. "But maybe my new assistant can cheer me during your absence."

"I'll do my darnedest!" beamed the Bituminous Boob.

"Very useful of you, I'm sure!" Ira showed too much fervor in clapping the Boob's vast shoulder. "Now to business!"

SOPHIE reported. Two speeches in type in seven languages. Mailing-lists bought from Georg Semosky. Burin in touch with Maline Orowitz, the Bobtail Plush; and Maline now holding a red-hot meeting of the Very Best in her lovely Long Beach home. Annabel Hicks and Helen McVittle enchanted with the prospects of many wild sessions. Then Sophie sprung her scheme for booming the Cause.

"You ought to bring together at your country place, each week-end, half a dozen or so of our most prominent friends and supporters. Next week ask Helen McVittle to bring up her nearest associates. The week after that, do the same with Annabel Hicks, and next with Maline, and so on. And as fast as we can find somebody who is really worth cultivating, you know, you'll invite him or her up in the same way. In a little while you'll build up an immense circle of most profitable acquaintance, see?"

(*Continued on page 92*)

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The Colyumists Confessional

III. Ted Robinson, *by Himself*

COLUMN conductors usually get that way by accident. The general public may believe that a man decides in his early youth to become a column conductor, and that he takes special training to that end, attending classes in column-conducting at the university, and then serving an apprenticeship as contrib to F. P. A.—but such is not the case. Column conductors are neither born nor made; they happen.

Away back in 1902, I was a reporter on the Indianapolis *Sentinel* (a paper that is now no more). Finding no place in the news columns where I could blow off the metered steam with which my boilers threatened to burst, I wrote a column of verses and presented it to the Sunday editor. He devised a title for the column and printed it on the editorial page on Sunday. And every Sunday I gave him a whole column of verses to print. This continued for a year, and I was not paid extra for all this poetry.

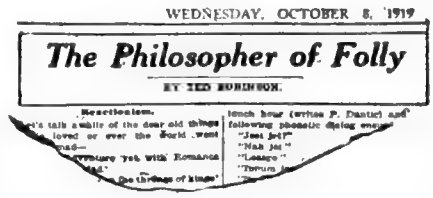
Meanwhile, however, I ceased to be a reporter. In the opinion of the city editor, I never had been one, but that is beside the point. I had become a reader of telegraph copy; then an editorial writer. And then the old *Sentinel* changed hands, and I went over to the *Journal*. That paper is dead, too; I used to be fatal to the papers I worked for. On the *Journal* I was asked to write a daily column of editorial paragraphs, and to continue to do a Sunday column of verse. This was a very pleasant job, and lasted until the *Journal* breathed its last.

I then went to the Cleveland *Leader* in an unorganized capacity. But the editor allowed me to start a little column of verse and jokes. In a few weeks the thing caught on, and I was relieved of all other duties. And my salary was raised. I was a column conductor!

I conducted that column for six years. Then the *Plain Dealer* sent for me, and I am here yet. I have written "The Philosopher of Folly" for the *Plain Dealer* for nine years, and I like it. I have been a member of the American Press Humorists' Association for fourteen years, and was its president in 1914-1915.

I HAVE contributors—three or four hundred of them, usually. It is easier, and more selfishly satisfactory, to run a column without the aid of contributors—to write all the stuff oneself. But having "contribs" is wholesome for a column. It creates wider interest, enlists thousands of loyal "fans," and keeps the column from getting into a rut of sameness. New ideas continually bloom, and the conductor's heart is made joyous every day by hunches of unexpected and refreshing cleverness. I open my morning mail every day with the eagerness of a small boy opening his Christmas packages. I can't use all the stuff—I can't use one-hundredth of it—but the ore repays smelting.

Ted Robinson,
The Cleveland PLAIN DEALER'S—



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1919

The Philosopher of Folly

BY TED ROBINSON.

A few years ago I organized these contributors, and now we have Contrib Club Dinners, about four times a year. I sent out three hundred invitations to the last one—all to bona-fide contributors who had had original stuff printed in the column.

"The Philosopher of Folly" has a metrical composition at its head every morning. These verses are sometimes humorous and sometimes serious; but each one is the very best I can do in the way of verse on that particular day. I do not "dash things off." But I never rewrite; I do all my work on the typewriter, and can not erase or interline. This is good practise—it forces one to perfect every line before it is set down.

It is easy for me to calculate that in the last fifteen years I have written forty-five hundred poems. But of course they are not all poems. Equally, of course, some of them are. Nobody who is acquainted with the laws of prosody, has a good ear and is a practised writer, can write a set of verses every day without chancing on a real poem once in a while. If he avoids slap-stick humor on the one hand, and sticky sentimentalism on the other; if he refuses to listen to the "give-the-public-what-they-want" fallacy; if he refuses to be satisfied with anything but his best; if he is blessed with a fair amount of good taste and an occasional flash of wit, he is more than likely to do some work that has a permanent value.

There are two kinds of humor columns—good, and rotten. There is no middle ground. But on some days a good column is bad, though on no days is a bad column good. And to be good, a column need not be all funny. Humor is a subtle thing; it pervades a column and is the soul of it; but even humor is not always funny.

The column conductor ought to tell the truth as he sees it, and sometimes the truth is mighty solemn. A part of his column may sparkle with wit; another part may contain satire; another, pathos; another, pure lyricism; yet another, earnest literary criticism and discussion. For the column man's range must be wide; it must glance at contemporary thought and life and art. His peculiar humor tinges the whole and gives his individuality to his work. He is not necessarily a "funny man." People with a strong sense of humor are seldom funny.

F. P. A. is not funny; B. L. T. is not funny; Don Marquis is not funny. These great column conductors have each his peculiar slant at life, and they have their moods, too; but they are not clowns. They are principally occupied in tilting against Bunk. They are flaying four-flushers in public life; they are battling for sincerity in art and literature. They will not praise the popular thing merely because it is popular, nor will they satirize the unpopular thing, solely in order to gain popularity for themselves. They don't always agree with the political views of their own papers, and they don't always conceal the fact. And they believe, with George Meredith, that "The well of true wit is Truth itself."

On the other hand, if a column man takes himself or his public too seriously, he is doomed. If he were a propagandist, he couldn't be a column man. Propagandists rarely possess the ultimate sense of humor.

TO RETURN to personalities: I am forty years old, a native of Indiana, the husband of one wife, the father of one son and the author of one book. The book is called "Mere Melodies," and its contents are lyrical and more or less serious. But it is to be followed next season by another book of verses, and these are to be in the lighter vein. In fact, they are to be humorous. In "Mere Melodies" there are a hundred poems, and in selecting these I purposely chose from those that were not less than five years old. Thus I was able to apply in some measure the test of time. It was with the same idea of letting time mellow and winnow that I had no book of verse published until after I had been writing and printing verse for twenty years.

Finally, this is the first time I ever wrote so much copy in the first person singular. Being a newspaper man, I feel rather ashamed of it.

Mr. Robinson selected the first three of the following bits from his column as the best of the year (as he thinks):

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THE OBITUARY ANECDOTE

Tell me not that every story
  Told about the heroes who
Have deceased and gone to glory
  Must be swallowed down as true!

Recently have crossed the border
  Several worthy men of note;
Now do writers make to order
  Many a doubtful anecdote.

Lives of great men all remind us
  If we do one half as well,
We'll depart and leave behind us
  Wheezes that we didn't tell—

Wheezes told about another
  Man, by Chauncey M. Depew,
When you die, O noted brother,
  They'll exhume again for you!

Let us then be on the job—it's
  Fate that literary hacks
When they have to write our obits,
  Crib them from the almanacs!

THE CATHOLIC TASTE

To classic tones I am not deaf
  Because I like the modern lay;
  Horace I do not cast away
Because I'm fond of Mutt and Jeff.

I hold it true that I can go
  With joy to Shakespeare plays, and still
  Take pleasure in a vawdevill,
Or in a moving-picture show.

For there are times, and times enough,
  When we demand rare subtleties—
  And then again, some low-brow wheeze
Delights, and rough-neck, slapstick stuff!

In mornings, on my way to town,
  I read the works of Irvin Cobb;
  At evening, when I'm off the job,
I feast with old Sir Thomas Browne.

Which is my choice, you seek to know?
  You might as well inquire, dear sir,
  Such things as, "Which do you prefer—
Mince pie, or Michael Angelo?"

SECRETS OF SONG

When Homer smote the instrument
  Which Kipling, in a verse satiric,
Miscalled a lyre (in which event
  His epic would have been a lyric)
But few were found who would devote
  Attention to Achilles' anger,
When Homer smote—whate'er he smote—
  With tuneful clangor.

Through seven towns he begged his bread,
  And each disdained his deathless ditty;
But each, as soon as he was dead,
  Made claim to be his native city.
O Smyrna, Rhodos, Colophon,
  Salamis, Argos, Athens, Chios!
What higher fame ye might have won
  By being pious!

Let us, enlightened, try to give
  A different ending to the story;
Claim we our Homers while they live,
  And when they die, we'll share the glory.
Oh, treat no wandering bard with scorn—
  The bread ye give is heavenly manna;

. . . . . .

(The writer of these lines was born
  In Indiana.)

ABOUT TIME

A headline in our f. p. says:

STATE TO TIGHTEN
AUTO THEFT RULES

That's a good idea, say we. Rules governing the theft of autos have been altogether too loose in the past; a hard-working auto thief could never tell when he was overstepping them. A simple codification of these rules would greatly benefit the fraternity and greater efficiency would result in the long run.

ROYSTERING, MAYBE

Dashing through East Cleveland (says P. Dantic) in my Stanley 200-passenger here lately, I have bifocaled a show sign which gives me pause—and several other things. Here it is:

REPAIRING
AND
PHOLSTERING.

Is "pholstering" some new art or process? Has it any relation to "philandering" or "bolstering"? I can not find it in any lexicon.

TO PHYLLIS—WITH SOME X-RAYS

Shrined in a lofty tomb
Where glory thrids the gloom,
  Napoleon's bones are dust,
And Alexander's frame,
Despite his awesome name,
  Yields to Time's mighty lust.
Posterity may not their parts discover—
  No prying pedantry
  May gloat o'er Cesar's knee;
Nor know if Titus
Endured arthritis.
  But, on the X-ray plate,
  Each joint articulate,
Behold thy lover!

From every compass point
Each rib and inmost joint
  Full justice meted.
Yonder a birdseye view,
And here a wormseye, too—
  Nothing deleted!
And so, dear heart, should I too grow in glory,
  The gaping world may learn
  Thus did my femur turn,
And wondering, number
Dorsal and lumbar;
  And scientists shall reconstruct my story;
So treasure tenderly
This pergola of me—
  Memento mori!

SI ATTICA.

A TRUE SKUNK STORY

Incognito tells it; 'tis a humorous tale, but a sad one. A traveling salesman, who was called Skunky Jim, started a skunk farm in Canada. He fenced in ten acres with eighteen-inch woven wire, it being a known fact that a skunk won't crawl up over anything—he always keeps his nose to the ground. So an eighteen-inch fence was high enough. There was a creek running through the land. S. J. would get the carcass of a horse or cow, put it in the ten-acre lot, and that was all there was to raising skunks.

In a short time, the law of averages getting in its work, he had 5,000 skunks. At the beginning, he bored 10,000 holes in the enclosure with a posthole digger. These were for the skunks to burrow in.

One night the creek got on a rampage, owing to a spell of wet weather. The ten acres were flooded, and the 10,000 postholes were filled with water and the 5,000 skunks were DROWNED! Ain't life awful?

IT'S UP TO IBÁÑEZ

Corregio (Licensed Literary Sleuth No. 43, he is) discovers it on Page — of the 120th edition of the fourth translation into English of "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." We are told that a lady delights in roller skating, and before the sentence closes we learn that all her skating is done on ice, in an Ice Palace. Corregio protests.

But we can not o.k. the criticism until we know more of the manners and customs of the European nations. Maybe they do their roller-skating on ice, over there.

RARA AVIS IN TERRIS

(These hats are trimmed in Glycerine Ostrich and Burnt Goose."—*Millinery Adv. in our F.P.*)

Oh, pity the Glycerine Ostrich,
  Who strolls on the glimmering sand;
He weeps for the doom of each glistering plume,
  And he groans till he scarce can stand!
Oh, pity the Glycerine Ostrich,
  No more can he sing or smile;
The glycerine tears they drip from his ears—
  He's doomed by the Demon Style!

But sad as I am for the Ostrich,
  I'm sadder still for the Goose
Who will honk no more by the reedy shore
  Where the Muskrat mews to the Moose;
They are fetching the fardels of faggots
  And building a funeral pile—
They're applying the torch that the Goose may scorch,
  Offered up to the Demon Style!

Oh, woe to the Glycerine Ostrich!
  To the Oxydized Gander, woe!
And why the women demand for trimmin'
  Such cruelties, I don't know!
(And how do you glycer an ostrich,
  And how do you burn a goose?
And I would say more, but my heart is sore,
  And anyhow, what's the use?)

A JOURNALISTIC JOURNAL

Oct. 14.—A fellow sends us a poem which he says he would sell to the magazines, but the magazines are having trouble, the printers being on strike, and he's afraid there won't be any magazines printed for quite some time, so he sends his poem to us.

We appreciate the courtesy, even though we are not going to print the poem. It's about the sort of thing the magazines would buy, and not good enough for us. Nevertheless, the author's letter suggests great possibilities. It may be that if this strike keeps on long enough, all the poets will be obliged to send us their output. And if once we get fellows like Robert Frost and Arthur Guiterman and Amy Lowell and Louis Untermyer to contributing to this column they'll never go back to the monthlies. The delightful uncertainty will appeal to them. They'll never know when we are going to throw what they consider their best stuff into the waste-basket without a word of explanation. And this will intrigue them to such an extent that they will become chronic contributors—for which state there is no cure.

WHAT ARE PARIS GREEN STOCKINGS?

That's what B. R. B. wants to know, and B. R. B. is a preacher, too. His curiosity on this subject was aroused by these lines about Gaby Deslys in the New York Sun:

"She wore a fur dress which is the latest thing in Paris green stockings of exceedingly delicate texture, pumps and a small felt hat."

***In the April number Rupert Hughes will appear at the Colyumists' Confessional as proxy for F. P. A., who conducts "The Conning Tower" of the New York* Tribune.**

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The great man's sole thought was his work, Brennan found. "My Art," Cragg would say, with a wave of his hand that suggested something of tremendous import.

Betrayal

By Charles Saxby

Arabia — A great novelist on the search for local color—The revelation of a secret—One of Charles Saxby's characteristic vivid, striking stories. Look for more of them in later numbers.

AFTERWARD, when that which was to be had happened and an inexorable "finis" was written across it all, Brennan found that he could never quite remember how it had begun. Those first weeks were rather a chaos in his memory, both mental and elemental, for he and the monsoon seemed to have landed at Bir Ahmed together.

A different landing from the one which he had pictured as befitting the dignity of the new agent of the Cosmic Petroleum Company's branch. Night and a wind like a solid, heated wall; carried in the arms of two huge negroes through a smother of yeasty foam. An impression, seen through a veil of flying, stinging sand, of white houses; of forms, sheeted and mysterious, huddled in leeward angles, while overhead the date-palms creaked and moaned, lashing their branches against a distraught moon.

It was Parrish, the agent whom he had come to relieve, who was most present in these initiatory weeks. Yellowed and worn by his three years of the coast, he pervaded the days with all the advice of the about-to-go for the newly arrived.

"Oh, it's a great place," he said, with a languid wave of his hand in the general direction of everywhere. "I suppose you know you will be the only white man here, or didn't they tell you that when they handed you the appointment in the head offices? Of course there is the steamer twice a month. You will get so you are so anxious to see the fellows on board that you can hardly wait for her coming."

Brennan stared at that, for under no circumstances could he imagine himself interested in those frazzled specimens of the British merchant marine that officered that coasting tub. But Parrish, in his light of superior knowledge, went wearily on:

"There is practically nothing to do and nothing to do it to. Just the tanks down here, six wells out on the Terahi and a ten-mile pipe-line between the two, with a crew of Karachee Eurasians to run it all. Everything just as when we took it over: we are merely sitting down on it to keep any one else from getting a foothold on

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the Gulf. If you can stick it for three years and don't die of sunstroke, cholera or fever, they will hand you something better, the same as they are doing to me."

Through the heat, which even at six A.M. already sat like a weight upon his chest, Brennan listened and gazed out on Bir Ahmed. It lay before him, spread out under the sun in a sort of gaudy squalor, with the pigeons wheeling round the squat minaret of its only mosque. The reek of it stole in with sick suggestions that were corroborated by Parrish's yellow leanness. And this was to be his place for the next three years.

Then the buoyancy of his youth reasserted itself. After all, to be connected in any way with such a world-wide affair as the Cosmic Petroleum was a tremendous thing for a fellow. In the picture-gallery of his mind he had hung quite a portrait of the company; a sort of vast invisible arm encircling the globe in a commercial strangle-hold that lifted even the most minor of its officials quite above the lot of ordinary mortals.

Not until it was too late and the shock of the affair had torn that fancied official security from him did Brennan realize how much that view of things had been with him.

Now, as he contrasted his own fresh strength with Parrish's devitalization, he felt his jaw set in determination.

"Surely even here, if a fellow showed that he could do things, the company would——"

"Do nothing," Parrish harshly interrupted. "And do it most when you most don't want to. Sit still; that is what you are here for."

He repeated these last words when, a week later, the steamer returned, bound southward for Aden. As he leaned far out over her rail, his voice came back, shouting above the first churnings of the screw:

"Remember—the stiller you sit, the better."

And Brennan from the stern of the shore boat bobbing in the wake, watched the widening strip of water between them and felt deep down in himself the preliminary stirrings of the truth of much of what the other had said. He felt it even more as he paced the brick floors of the agency that night, his footsteps echoing in that strangely increased emptiness that the departure of even one person can leave behind.

Parrish—not much of a chap, but, hang it, how he hated to see the fellow go.

It was this feeling of being thrown back upon whatever one was in oneself, instead of that of being carried along in the accepted manner of the vast bulk of humanity, which is the high-pressure safety of civilization. Practically nothing to do but be, and a vast emptiness in which to do it. Bir Ahmed all about him; a handful of grave Arabs and a swarm of negroes made the town; by day squalidly, noisily glittering, by night in a sullen silence. It all flashed before his eyes like those mirages playing over the wide thorn wastes of the Terahi, of which one could never tell how much was sheer fantom and how much backed by substance. He was constantly trying to walk through things that resisted him or grasping at prospects that dissolved under his touch.

Then, out of it all, came Farid al Mehsin.

It was down in the bazaar, where Brennan was learning to drink coffee and exchange sententious compliments with Biblical old fellows, seated cross-legged in hole-in-the-wall shops. The very heart of this maze of puzzlement, a kaleidoscope of every race from the Nyanzas to the Bikaneer, washed in on some mysterious current of life and left swirling in this backwater of the coast. Then slowly, but with the sureness of a trained actor standing out from a mob of stage supers, so Farid al Mehsin began to stand out against that background, and with his coming Brennan felt that he had at last touched the East.

He had thought he had touched it before, each transshipment of his voyage, Marseilles, Port Said, Aden, seeming the opening of a new world. It was something like those nests of Chinese ivory boxes in which the lifting of each successive lid discloses another box within, even more wondrously carved; but with this difference, that each inner world of the East seemed larger than the one encompassing it. It was rather like discovering infinity by the peeling of successive rinds.

IT WAS, of course, their common youth that first attracted Brennan as he noticed Farid sitting there, his poised, smooth muscularity in such contrast to the Old Testament elders all about him. It was one of those moments that sometimes came to Brennan, and of which he hardly approved, especially as a Cosmic Petroleum agent—A moment that seemed to rip open a further glimpse of all that he had approached in coming to the place.

The surroundings helped, no doubt; the half-gloom of the arches, the splashes of blinding light against amber shadows, the gleam of rugs, of gay silks and tarnished brass; the pervading scent of coffee, coriander. and the taint of camels on hot leather, He would have been embarrassed to express it, but somehow the sight of the young Arab sitting there in such poised austerity seemed to give him a sense of a different life; one of a certain still vehemence, wide and blazing as the sky and land all about them.

He was glad when the other's hand was stretched out to him, taking the Panama from his head and laying it aside with a quiet:

"Have none told you that here, in the hot season, such things are death?"

"What—you speak English?" Brennan exclaimed.

"I was many years in Aden, and five more at the English college in Cairo."

Then a ten-yard length of cool white and gold was deftly wound about Brennan's head. and the other went on:

"Accept that from Farid al Meshin, and remember to stay in your house in the hours of short shadows."

At first, in that Americanism that demands a definite object for all its actions, Brennan told himself it was the undoubted value of the acquaintance that attracted him, for in all things pertaining to these countries the young Arab's mind was a well of unfailing knowledge.

How the fellow knew it! Mecca and Bagdad, the hidden oases of Hadramaut; even Murzuk and the half-lost cities of the African Fezzan, their names all fell from his lips with the ease of familiarity.

As the months dragged on and Brennan faced the prospect of even more to come of pitiless heat and gaunt loneliness, he found himself, even though slightly against his will, turning more and more to this companionship.

Night after night, on the roof of the agency, he would find himself waiting the arrival of Farid, eager to consult him on the day's happenings, fuming with American impatience against the immemorial inertia of the East.

Some sleek Turkish official, perhaps, with the smile of a woman and the eyes of a pig, making petty trouble in hopes of polite blackmail. Or the fanatical old mullah, a sort of green-turbaned Isaiah with an ingrowing grouch, preaching mild *djehad* because Brennan's projected new pipe-line would cross the sacred shadow of the minaret.

So they would talk, far into the sweating nights, too torrid for sleep, the sky clamped down like a purple spangled lid on the baking rim of land and Gulf. The gurgle of water in the ditches, the ceaseless moan of the leagues of date-palms; only the stars for light, since the glow of even a candle would have brought about them a cloud of insects like the unsealing of some apocalyptic pit. Opposite him Farid, a strip of brown chest between the white folds of his *djibbah*, the gleam of his cigaret on grave mouth and chin, catching reflected sparks from his eyes, somber under a flare of black brows.

"As to the *vakeel*, give the Stambuli swine nothing. The day of the Turk is drawing to an end."

"You mean—?" asked Brennan, surprised at the sudden fire with which the other spoke.

"My words were spoken without thought," Farid answered. "There are things which it would not be well for you to know, for your own sake. And how indeed should I know them: I, who am but a seller of pearls and silks in the bazaar."

THE last was a statement and not a question, Brennan saw; a part of that enormous reserve he always felt about the other; a remoteness, even, as of one whose eyes were held by a different vision.

"In the matter of the mullah," Farid went on, "why not carry your pipeline across the lesser wadi?"

"That would cost five hundred dollars more," Brennan objected, as though that settled it.

"Is not your company, then, able to afford it?"

"Afford it!" Brennan laughed. "Man, can't I make you understand that we are the richest——"

A raised hand halted him, the cigaret puffed more deeply in a pause of concentration.

"I understand your words, yes, they are plain. It is your actions that puzzle. If you are so rich, why not be gracious, and avoid offense to all the town?"

Brennan leaned forward, talking with an effect of words of one syllable, tapping the other's knee as if trying to establish communication by a sort of masculine Morse.

"Can't you see? This is my only chance to make good on anything, and I want

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He woke again, in the flat half-tones of daybreak. Farid still sat there, a solitary figure, hollow-eyed from vigil.

to establish a record for myself here in Bir Ahmed."

"You mean that you want to establish a record for yourself in New York."

The words brought Brennan a realization of how much he was trying to live in two places. All his prospects in the world lay back there in those head offices, while he himself and all his human needs was so tremendously just here. It gave him an uneasy sense of being stretched out across the world, and a wonder as to what might happen if a pull came between those opposing ends.

But to deflect a Cosmic Petroleum pipeline at the behest of a night-shirted old fanatic of a half-heathen faith—it struck him with almost a feeling of blasphemy, and he laughed in contempt. Then an added cleavage came as he considered, for the first time, that that faith was probably Farid's own. An adder of suspicion stung his mind; as though he felt it, Farid rose.

"Let us not talk of it to-night. The heat is great and you have stopped sweating; drink much hot tea with limes in it, and sleep."

But there was to be no sleep for Brennan that night. The sand-flies found his roof, driving him to the oven-like courtyard below; then a torrid wind wailed in from Terahi, bringing fresh fever under his skin. Unable to rest, he paced the hot flagstones, his mind instinctively seeking a human hook on which to hang its irritations.

Even the usual coolness of approaching dawn failed, and from all about came the fretful mutterings of the sleepless town. The whole place seemed against him, even this man he had thought his friend. In a febrile excitement which he could not stop, his brain spun webs of suspicion that grew and multiplied, hanging in the black solitudes of the house. He panted for the physical relief of some action, sudden and decisive, though dimly aware that this was probably the very hour in which to heed Parrish's injunction to sit still.

The wells—that was the place for him. They were getting slack out there, and a few days' absence would break up the closeness of this association. It was a mistake for a Cosmic agent to be too intimate with people. In a flash he saw himself cool and aloof in a sort of splendid isolation. But then—hang it—a fellow had to have some companionship.

With a chill he realized that Bir Ahmed was getting a grip, and that pull he had foreseen was already upon him. The wells—that was the solution. As with his servant behind him he rode away toward the first streaks of the dawn, he already felt the relief of that great American panacea of doing something.

There was confusion in the maze of paths through the high *jowarrie* crops of the oasis fringe, and the sun was already terrible when he reached the wells, their derricks rising in strangely western suggestion against the shimmering vastness of the Terahi. Relentless as the intolerable sky above, and seemingly as incapable of being changed, the thorn wastes stretched away on every side. By

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contrast the languid creak of the pumps, the forms of the Eurasians, prone and in spots of shadow, seemed hemmed in as by an elemental mockery of human endeavor.

It was foolish, he knew, and even dangerous, but Brennan's blood rose in an angry impulse to fling himself headlong at this age-old inertia all about him. He dismounted and strode forward, seeking something about which to raise his voice in an authoritative defiance of this squeeze of sun and sand. Then a sort of boiling thunderbolt struck the base of his brain; he felt himself falling headlong and being dragged into shelter.

How long he lay in the darkness of that hut he never knew; his brain was a torment as of molten quicksilver, his eyes and ears assailed by mockeries of unattainable coolness. He saw himself stretched out across the world, his head in those Wall Street offices, beaten upon by a million typewriters, his feet held by the sands of Bir Ahmed, the rest of him drawn thin about the blazing wheel of the sun. From the doorway, faces, dark and distressed, peered in at him, mouths and hands waggling in ineffectual sympathy. If only some one would come, even those down-at-heel Englishmen of the steamer—oh, Parrish had been right—Parrish had known.

How real Farid looked, kneeling there at his side. Another hallucination, of course, like that lake lapping bluely in the corner of the room, for Farid was back in the town, and he had resolved to have nothing to do with the fellow. But the grave eyes were extraordinarily convincing, and Brennan could have sworn that those were actual hands kneading about the base of his brain.

The moments dragged by into hours, but the fingers were still at work. Under their pressure the molten torment seemed to give reluctant way, as though that fire were being coaxed up into his forehead. He could feel the thin flesh of it puffing up into great welts of heat. Then came a crisscross slash of a razor, and the superheated blood poured out, steaming as it came. Brennan cried with the relief of it and instantly fell asleep.

Far into the night he woke again, back in the agency of Bir Ahmed. There was a cooling sweat upon his skin, and a drink, acid with limes, was raised to his lips.

"So it was really you," he muttered.

"One of your men brought word at noon," Farid answered.

He woke again, in the flat half-tones of daybreak.

There was a servant stretched in sleep in a corner, but Farid still sat there, a solitary figure, hollow-eyed from vigil.

Brennan murmured, picking up the threads where he had dropped them to sleep.

"You came——"

"How should I not?" asked Farid, in complete simplicity.

"But noon—God—that sun."

"As for the sun, I am desert-born. Not this desert, but such a one as this can never be. The Ruba al Kali, the Red One, which only we who are of it dare to cross.

"It was there that I learned to draw out the arrow of the sun," Farid went on in a soothing monotone. "It was a dervish who taught me. He had been a man of *aib*, the unpardonable; but then he dwelt naked and penitent among the rocks of the Red Khor, and God had given him the knowledge of healing. He hid me many months when I stumbled there, a boy of twelve, sorely wounded, while the Turks sought my life after killing my father and brothers."

To Brennan in his half-torpor the words brought glimpses, remote but vivid, like lightning on distant peaks. A scarlet ravine under a blasting sky; a boy, gaunt and hunted, his eyes still appalled with the slaying of his kin, his sole companion a naked fanatic visited of God with repentance for sin. It somehow explained that impression the other sometimes gave as of one almost devastated by some repressed blue-hot flame.

Then his thoughts shifted back to his own case.

"As to the pipe-line," he began, "tell the mullah——"

"Wait," said Farid, with a flash of amused teeth. "Wait, for with returning strength you may see differently again. We have a saying on that in Hadramaut—'In the sick mouth are many gifts.'"

II

THOUGH he knew such speculations to be profitless, Brennan often wondered, in the days that were to come, what might have been had not Antony Cragg selected Bir Ahmed as his point of mental attack upon the East.

It was late in the year when he came, after November had brought a sparkle of coolness, like the lifting of a great weight from body and mind. Days before his arrival Brennan heard of him from Farid as they talked one afternoon in the bazaar.

"There is one who comes soon to your house," he said glancing gravely up, immobile save for the puff of the eternal cigaret. "A writer of books, and a great man in your own land. He waits now at Aden for the steamer, and he will be here in five days."

"You know all that?" Brennan mocked, to conceal his surprise.

"We know all who come to these coasts, from Suez to Koweit. We have means."

Farid finished with a silence that was almost a gesture in its implication of things concealed but far-reaching. Brennan was aware that it would be useless to ask how the other knew; he was becoming accustomed to the untraceable sources of information all around him. These enormous distances, seemingly so untenanted, were strung together as by a sort of wireless that, in every town, centered in its bazaar. Those arched alleys of shadow and murmur seemed just whispering galleries tuned to catch every rumor from the widespread vagueness on every side. The intrigues of Teheran, the blistering mutterings of Medina, or the gossip of Suakim and Karachee, could hardly happen before they were discussed there in Bir Ahmed.

So he was not surprised when, with some fuss, circumstance and a large amount of tropical baggage, a white man landed from the next steamer and presented himself at the agency with the air of one to whom all doors were appropriately open. But that he should prove to be actually Antony Cragg made Brennan gasp with the sheer luck of it. Antony Cragg, the very high-priest of America's near-literature, whose three books a year might be termed the seventy-fives of its annual literary bombardment. To Brennan, however, the eclipsing fact just then was Cragg's intimacy, so well known as to be slightly suspicious of advertisement, with the socially great—an intimacy that included even those financial pole-stars of the Cosmic Petroleum itself.

But, after all, in his isolation it was Cragg himself who most counted. A man of a tall and lean impressiveness, of whom it was difficult to say whether he looked much older or much younger than his real age. There was still about him so much of that eagerness, that lack of retrospect, which is the privilege of the younger years; but there was about him, too, such a sense of a subtle, inner exhaustion.

"They told me I would find the real thing here in Bir Ahmed," he laughed, in half-explanation of his coming as he greeted Brennan.

Later, in the more expansive moments after dinner, he enlarged on that.

"A new inspiration, that is what I need. Civilized people, like yourself, for instance, set against the background of the East with all the clash of two differing systems of life and ethics."

"Why not people like yourself?" asked Brennan in all humbleness.

"I?" Cragg gazed at the other as though trying to adjust himself to a new and unexpected view-point.

"My dear fellow, I am entirely out of it. All I do is to look on and describe. An author never takes part. He would soon be in a mess if he did that."

He stopped, almost violently, looking out over the town and bay spread below in the moonlight. Instinctively he pulled out a note-book.

"Splendid background that. I must jot it down. 'Minaret rising like a beacon of faith above the tossing sea of palm crests'—wonderful word 'minaret.' I must use that in my opening paragraph, it sets the scene so for you at once—makes them see things."

"I know," Brennan nodded eagerly. "It always did that for me, too. Just the word, and up they come—deserts and caravans and *harims* and mysterious cities with white walls."

Cragg turned and surveyed him in some surprise.

"How comes it that they stuck a fellow like you down in this out-of-the-way hole? When I get back, I shall have to mention your name in the quarters where it will do the most good."

It was then that the extraordinary luck of having such a guest struck Brennan. Antony Cragg, who, apart from his own prominence, could mention one's name in those "quarters" where even a whisper might produce such results.

He resolved that Cragg should at least have no cause of complaint against him. The great man's sole thought was his work, Brennan found. "My art," Cragg would say, with a wave of his arm that suggested something of tremendous import. "Atmosphere," was his first cry, and he absorbed it insatiably as Brennan piloted him through the pillared mazes of the palms, where the coo and flutter of doves mingled with the creak of the *sakkiyehs* lifting bright threads of water from the ditches.

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Between Farid's quiet syllables the desert murmured back in a running accompaniment, weirdly illustrative of all he said.

Then came a morning when Cragg returned, from a solitary stroll through the bazaar, in a glow of excitement.

"I have found him," he exclaimed, flinging himself down in a lounging-chair with an effect of exhausted triumph.

"The very type I wanted for my subordinate hero," he went on, in that undoubtingness of the other's interest in all that concerned his work. "I never dreamed I should really find one so perfect. The girl, of course, will be a splendid type of our pure young American womanhood, so the real hero must be American, too."

He paused, eying Brennan with all the impersonality of art, and with all its unconscious and unconscionable proprietorship as well.

"I'll use some of you for him," he nodded, "but the other one must be an Arab, of the very highest class. That is where the clash will come in, you see."

"Oh—yes—of course," said Brennan, seeing it was expected of him, and thus satisfied, Cragg rushed on.

"I saw the very one just now, down in the bazaar. Splendid stuff, that. Gleams of gold from bister shadows, scents of queer spices and a murmur of unknown tongues, and in the middle of it all a sort of young prophet dreaming over a bowl of pearls in a scarlet-hung niche."

"Farid al Mehsin," cried Brennan, springing up. "Is he back, then?"

Not since that day, now nearly a month gone, when the other had foretold him of Cragg's coming visit, had he seen Farid. One of those mysterious absences, presumably in search of pearls, had claimed him, absences from which he returned with a darker shade upon his skin, an added droop of fatigue about his mouth, but with a concealed and more fiery glow, as of a coming triumph more clearly foreseen.

"Get him up here, if you know him," Cragg almost ordered in a petulant bruskness. "I want to study him. Great Heavens, think of what that fellow must know of all this! I'd like to—to turn him inside out with my very hands."

Cragg's fingers crooked and he jumped up, pacing the room in a restlessness that disordered his whole presence. Brennan could understand something of these moods of an increasing savageness that came upon him, for in the nights past he had heard Cragg trying to write.

Hours of pacing and muttering, of the furious crumpling of sheets of paper, and, seeping through his closed door, hanging almost palpably on the air of the great silent house, a sense as of a very demon of craving mental hunger.

That demand on Cragg's part for a new inspiration was no mere shibboleth of the writing jargon, he saw. As he put it to himself, with a young and brutal directness:

"Cragg's pumps were sucking sand."

He could almost see those mental pistons, driven by the overgeared engine of Cragg's brain, plunging up and down in the drouth of an exhausted well.

"Get him here!" Cragg went jerkily on, an added grate in his voice. "I want to know him, I must know him—great heavens, if I can't get what I want here——"

Then came a flash of that humorous self-seeing which was part of his undeniable charm.

"Don't mind my vapors. We authors are as unreasonable as women, but think of the strain we undergo in bringing forth our brain-children. Though I produce no Minervas, I can sympathize with Jove's headache. But seriously, I simply must know that fellow."

Not even to himself could Brennan explain the reluctance that came upon him to expose Farid, all unknowing, to the scalpel of Cragg's mind. He knew that his silence was becoming marked, but he was unable to break it until the other spoke again.

"Don't you know him, then?"

"He is the only friend I have in the place," Brennan answered, and Cragg's eyebrows went up in question.

"Your friend, eh! Is that quite wise, in your position here?"

"I owe Farid my actual life."

"Oh—life," Cragg answered, with an implied shrug. "A man will hardly kill, of course, but he will take all the advantage he can, all the same."

"On the contrary, Farid might kill, if he had sufficient reason," said Brennan, "but I doubt if he would understand taking advantage of a friend."

"A friend?"

Cragg caught at the word, rolling it on his tongue as though to taste its full savor, and Brennan saw that he was back again in the unfolding web of his coming story.

"A friend—the very thing. Of course, that is where the clash would come in. And in a place like this, I suppose a fellow

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might take another with such ridiculous seriousness."

"I hardly think you understand," Brennan quietly put in.

"But I want to, if you'll tell me."

There was a magnetism about the man when he chose, and under it Brennan found himself talking, telling far more than he imagined, for the mind of his hearer was trained to leap from the baldest expression to all that might lie back of it. Behind the other's sentences Cragg read of those monsoon-time days, snatching at remnants of sleep in the brick recesses of the house, emerging at night to those torrid darknesses in which Brennan, more nearly swamped than he had realized, had clung to those companionships of the roof. Then came the incident at the wells, and with it Cragg's note-book.

"Stop—I must put that down, 'The arrow of the sun.' Oh—splendid."

He broke off with a frank laugh at his own expense.

"You see, I am incorrigible."

"But I understand," he went on, more seriously. "After all, what do we know of such things in that hectic life of ours? We go to a man's house, eat his bread, and next morning down-town we knife him financially in the back, and accredit ourselves for so doing. But here——"

He walked to the window, gazing out on all that he so undoubtedly did understand, and Brennan caught his murmur.

"A friend. What a treasure to have."

And then, more softly, even unconsciously, came the refrain that seemed the very warp on which was woven the whole pattern of his life.

"Oh—splendid, splendid stuff."

III

THE trip to the desert had been part of Brennan's original plan for Cragg's entertainment. That Farid should be of the company was Cragg's added suggestion, given with one of those outbursts of enthusiasm which caused Brennan's private description of the author as "Always giving himself mental shots in the arm."

"The desert, with that fellow! Oh, I can see it already!" Cragg cried, pacing about. "The immensity of it, and that face, seen against the night sky in the glow of a camp-fire. There's something hidden under all that poise, and out there—what a chance to get at whatever inner mainspring it is that throbs off the pulses of his life!"

Brennan could imagine it also, the desert, seen in the company of such a master of it as Farid al Mehsin. Angrily he argued against himself; what possible harm could it do Farid to be fictionally portrayed in a book that would appear in another language, ten thousand miles away? His reluctance was just another proof of the hold that Bir Ahmed was getting on him, when all his real interests so undeniably lay with Cragg, and those slightly advertised intimacies of his. It was a relief when, in the bazaar next day, the solution came from Farid himself.

"So Cragg Effendi would see the desert?" he asked. "And the wishes of an honorable guest are the delight of the house. It can be arranged, if you say so. Some men, some camels, three days out across the Terahi to where the sands begin. That would be about the limit of safety for you."

"Look here," Brennan burst out, "don't go doing anything that——"

"I will admit that it serves me also," Farid went on. "I must leave again, and I can go with you and not return. You have but to say the word."

Say the word? It was another of those moments for which Brennan had so little sanction. Say the word; in the life he had left one said so many words so easily, and they all seemed to count so little. But now he hestitated, as he caught a blighting glimpse of all that a word might mean in its power to order and change. All the possible pathways of the future opened before him, their beginnings just a word, but their ends all so horribly hidden.

Then came some panic deep down in him, and, like a frightened horse, his mind shied away from these psychic subtleties. All this sort of thing was sheer craziness, and he wondered, with some distress, if it were possible that the East had actually struck into his brain with those blazing arrows of the sun-rays. He had read and heard stories of men who had "gone down" under the influences of just such places as this, sinking into mysteriously awful depths of Oriental degredation. Was it possible that he, too, was to be among them? Mentally he felt himself over to see if his shell of white character held any cracks in it. And of an American, surely the most distinguishing characteristic was the power of instant decision. He rose, exclaiming, with a vehemence born of his determination to be strictly rational:

"Then come—I want you."

"That is sufficient," Farid replied.

Three days they went, far beyond the accustomed horizon of Bir Ahmed. The Terahi lay behind them now, its wastes of thorn scrub frayed out into great stretches of sullen sand, and all day the jagged line of the Khor had lifted itself higher against the sky.

It was all so much as Brennan had pictured it, and so gloriously more; even the rocks of the *nullah* in which they were camped, red and rain-gouged, savagely sterile under the stars. From farther down the ravine came the reek of wood smoke and the voices of their Somalis, still feasting on the antelope that Brennan had shot that afternoon. Their own fire had sunk to a crimson glow, about which they gathered for relief from the limitless vagueness encompassing them. Cragg, on the other side, already asleep; himself, in prone contentment; Farid close by, gravely silent, like some presiding genius of the place.

If there had been disappointment, it was Cragg alone who felt it. Not that he had permitted it to reach the eyes or ears of his companions, but there was in his presence that feeling, which Brennan had come to know so well, of a savage still-hunger. It was Farid who was really the cause of that, and Brennan smiled now at his own reluctance to bring the two together. If, like this austere face of the desert round about them, Farid's grave poise concealed a mainspring of throbbing intensity, then so far Cragg had signally failed to pick the locks of its encasement.

He had silently admitted as much, with a quirk of humorous bafflement, as he wound himself into his coverings.

"It is to youth that this world really is," he sighed. "I come ten thousand miles to see all this, and now that I am here I must rest my bones and leave it all to your callous twenties."

"It will suit you better so," he went on, as Farid left them to give the orders for the night. "This will be the last time together for you two for a while, and you will have it alone. How you will talk—a place like this, a camp-fire and a night sky—it poultices one so. I envy you, side by side there, while I—sleep."

With a snort of self-disgust he rolled over in his blankets, claimed soon by a slumbrous breathing.

Brennan was grateful for that, as in the glow of the dying fire he lay by Farid, shoulder to shoulder, seeking contact against the almost terrible vacancy pressing on them from every side. As the voices of the men died away and the night gradually sank to a deeper stillness, he could catch the faint sibilant whisper of shifting sands that is the voice of the desert silence. Like an acid, it ate away lingering reserves, until the sentences passing between them seemed just the self-communings of a single mind.

"I go far this time, and it will be many months before you see me again," Farid murmured. "You have wondered why I hid my heart from you so long. In Bir Ahmed I dared not speak, but out here——"

As the words fell from the other's lips, strangely in tune with their stranger surroundings, Brennan felt a passing pity for Cragg, sunk in sleep only a few feet away, and yet so shut out from all that he had most desired. Between Farid's quiet syllables the desert murmured back in a running accompaniment, weirdly illustrative of all he said.

Revealings of his childhood in that hill-castle above the golden *dhourra* crops of Tihama; of his father, half-warrior Emir, half Sufi seer. And as commentary across the still air came the snort and stamp of the horses tethered down the *nullah*, the night-cry of a dreaming man in a long-drawn:

"*A-mee-nah—A-meen*——"

"Then, when I was but twelve years old, the Turks came."

The Turks; one forgot so that they and the Arabs were two different nations at perpetual odds. The yap of a distant jackal came echoing among the rocks in a wail of craven hunger, mingling with broken sentences that told of a tragic courtyard, filled with the reek of blood and flame. Beneath them Brennan caught hints of another fire, kindled by those flames in the breast of the man beside him.

"Our holy cities under the heel of Stamboul, our people hiding like beasts in the wastes of the deserts. The time has been weary, but we have used it well. Many of us have been to England, to Cairo, to the *madrissah* at Bombay, to learn the ways of the *geringhi*, that the Turk may reach his reckoning.

"Guns; that was our first need. Scores have I passed through Bir Ahmed, smuggled in my bolts of silk, paid for with my pearls."

"Where do you get them?" breathed Brennan, catching the fire of adventure. "Can not I help?"

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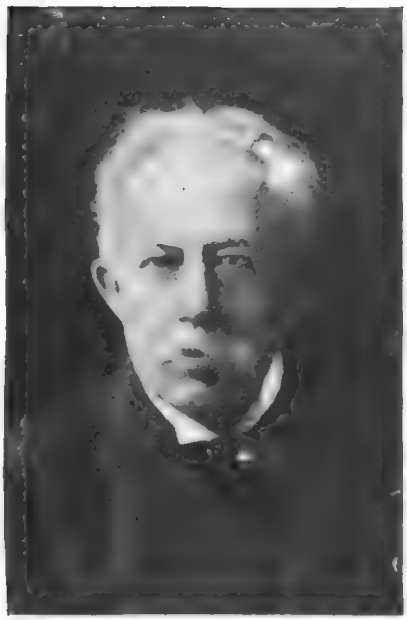

David Starr Jordan, first president of Hoover's college.

The Story of Hoover

By Vernon Kellogg

II

COLLEGIAN AND MINING ENGINEER

John Caspar Branner, Hoover's professor of geology.

What sort of man is Hoover? What are the secrets of his success as a leader of men and women. What sort of life did he lead in the forty years before he burst into public view as the savior of Belgium, the Food Administrator of America, the Director-General of Relief in Europe, and as a man who has wielded, without abusing, a power like that of kings and prime ministers?

The answer is a story rich in romance and full of meaning for lovers of America. This is the second of a series of five articles in which that story is told by Vernon Kellogg, one of Hoover's closest personal friends and an active assistant in all of his undertakings through the war and the armistice period. The first instalment dealt with Hoover's boyhood struggles; the next will describe his adventurous life as a mining engineer in Asia.

WE LEFT Herbert Hoover, at the end of the first instalment of our story, in the late summer of 1891, just at the threshold of his modern scientific university. It was not only the university of his dreams come true, but it was really to be the university of his graduation, the *alma mater* of a boy without any other mother. And it was the university of which he was to become, in later successful years, a patron and trustee. Stanford did much for Herbert Hoover; but so has he done much for Stanford.

Any university means many things, for all their lives, to those who have come timidly and wonderingly to its doors as boys and girls, and have gone out on that final day of happy reward and tearful good-bys as men and women eager to try themselves against the world outside the sheltered schoolrooms. And most of these things are to most persons who have known them things of pleasant and loving memory.

Stanford University

STANFORD is like any other university in this relation to its graduates. But there seems to be something unusually strong and yet at the same time unusually intangible in the ties that bind its former students to it. Perhaps the explanation lies as much in the special character of its students, at least its pioneer ones, as in the special character of the institution itself.

The students who came to Stanford in its earlier years came because it was different from other colleges, and because they did this it is likely that they themselves were different from other students. Like the restless, seeking pioneers that came over the desert and mountains to the Pacific Coast to find a different life from that of worn tradition and old ways, their descendants and the later-coming youth, who had mixed with them and been infected by their seeking spirit, flocked to this institution that offered a different kind of college atmosphere.

Its low arcaded quadrangle of mission buildings of yellow stone and heavy red tiles, nestling under high hills that run back to mountains, and surrounded by wide grain-fields flecked with rounded live-oaks and tall strange eucalyptus-trees, and neighbored by great barns and well-kept paddocks and exercising tracks in which sleek trotting-horses of famous Palo Alto breeding lounged or trained, was a strange new setting for studying Greek and Latin and mathematics and science.

"*Die Luft der Freiheit weht*" (The Winds of Freedom Blow) is the Stanford motto, and there was truly no more likely place for the winds of freedom to blow than over and through this college on a California ranch. And its founders did well to find for its first head a man than whom no other American scholar had given clearer indications of being anxious to break with clogging scholastic tradition.

The university itself, so tenderly conceived as a memorial to a boy lost to his parents, and so generously established as an opportunity for other boys, some of whom, like the hero of our story, might have had their parents lost to them, is an almost unique example of a great educational institution maintained by the fortune of a single family. All of the Stanford millions are returned to-day to the country in which they were accumulated in the form of the beautiful halls in which thousands of students have found a free training for independent existence and right citizenship. These students wear the Stanford cardinal as a red badge of obligation, not anarchy. No other college in the country had more of its sons and daughters, in proportion to their total number, devoting themselves to their country's service during the Great War. If Herbert Hoover was the most distinguished of the serving sons of Stanford, he was not more eager and devoted than many others.

Hoover Enters

BUT we leave our hero waiting too long upon the threshold of his dream university come true. It had been agreed, you remember, between young Hoover and his friendly examiner in Portland, that the candidate for admission should come to the Stanford Farm—which is the students' name for the campus and which literally described it in those beginning days—before the time of the university's opening, to be coached in the two or three studies in which his preparation was deficient. So he came down from the north a month before the announced time for opening, a lonesome boy without any friends at Stanford except the good Quaker professor of mathematics, and with all of his savings from the "real-estate business" tucked away in an inside pocket. They amounted in grand total to about two hundred dollars.

It was less simple getting to Stanford in those first days than it is now. There was not even a beginning then of the thriving town of Palo Alto that stands to-day with

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convenient railway station just at the entrance to the long palm-lined avenue that runs straight up to the main university quadrangle. It was all grain-field then, part of the great Hopkins estate, where now the college town welcomes the annually incoming freshmen, and offers them convenient lodging-places of all grades of comfort, and quick trams and motor-buses to the university.

Young Hoover had to get off at Menlo Park, the station of a few great country houses of California railway and bonanza kings, which offered no welcome for small boys with a few saved dollars in their inside pockets. He had to find a casual hackman to carry him and his bag and trunk to the university, a couple of miles away. But even there he found no place yet ready to house him. So some one advised him to go to Adalanta Villa, a mile or more back from the university in the hills, where President and Mrs. Jordan were living.

And there he did go, and found a warm and simple welcome and hospitality. He was soon ensconced in the presidential mansion and doing odd jobs about the establishment to pay for his board and lodging. His principal duties were to drive the university head to the distant railway station or to his presidential office surrounded by all the noise and confusion of excited workmen trying to get the new buildings in the middle of the grain-fields in readiness for the opening day.

Between drives and odd jobs he was feverishly at work on the finishing touches for his final entrance tests, and probably quite as feverishly worrying about them. He felt pretty safe on everything but the requirements in English composition. As a matter of fact, when he came to that fearful test he ignominiously failed in it and, indeed, did not finally get the required credit in it until nearly ready to graduate. But he was passed in enough of the entrance requirements to be given freshman standing, "conditioned in English," a phrase not unfamiliar to other college students. He had, however, added something to his score by a Hooverian *tour de force*.

Noting that a credit was offered in physiology, about which he knew nothing technically, he reasoned that as every one, of course, knew already a little something about his insides and how they worked, one ought to be able to find out a little more from some text-book, and that the two littles might make enough for passing purposes. Thereupon with that prompt and positive reaction to stimulus which has been conspicuously characteristic of him all his life, he got a book, read it hard all of the day and night before the examination—and passed in physiology.

College Days

THE story of Herbert Hoover's college life reveals no startling features to distinguish it from the college careers of other thousands of boys endowed with intelligence, energy and ambition, but not with money, and hence forced to earn their living as they went along. Nevertheless it does reveal many of the main characteristics that we know so well to-day. For he did things all through those four years in the same way that he does them to-day—promptly, positively and quietly. They were mostly already done before it was generally recognized that he was doing them.

His two hundred dollars could not last long, even in a college of no tuition-fees and an unusually simple student life. He had to earn his way all the time, and he earned it by hard work, directed, however, by good brains. Many a story, most interesting but, unfortunately, mostly untrue, has been told of his various expedients to earn the money necessary for his board and lodging, clothes and books.

Not a few of these stress his expertness as waiter in student dining-rooms. Undoubtedly he would have been an expert waiter if he had been a waiter at all. But he was not. A famous San Francisco chef has often been quoted in interesting detail as to the "hash-slinging" cleverness of the future American food controller in the dining-room which this chef managed—by the way, just *after* Hoover left college—in the great Stanford dormitory in those early days.

Earning His Way

BUT, though interesting, these details are mythical; as are also the accounts of the care he took of professorial gardens, although that would have been an excellent substitute for the outdoor exercise and play which he found little time for in college except in geological field excursions and camps. Nor was he—and he declares this with some heat—ever nurse to the professorial babies, which also has been often placed to his credit by imaginative story-tellers.

For at the very beginning of his college life Herbert Hoover and another distinguished son of Stanford, known to the early students as Rex Wilbur and to the present ones as Prex Wilbur—for he is now the university's president—put their heads together and decided that if they had any brains at all in these heads they would make them count in this little matter of earning their way through college. And both of them did.

In most of the things that Herbert Hoover did as a college boy to earn his needed money he revealed an unusual faculty for "organizing" and "administering," which is precisely a faculty that as a man he has revealed to the world in highest degree.

He organized at some profit to himself the system of collecting and distributing the laundry of the college boys which had been done casually and unsatisfactorily by various San José and San Francisco establishments. He acted also as impresario, at a modest commission, for various lecturers and musicians, developing an arrangement for bringing visiting stars from San Francisco to the near-by university.

More important in its permanent influence on student activities was his work in reorganizing the system of conducting general student-body affairs, especially the financial side of these affairs.

In his senior year he had been made treasurer of the student body and on taking office found little treasure and much confusion. Each of the many student activities had its own separate being, its own officers and own funds—or debts—and a dangerous freedom from general student control. Hoover worked out a system by which all control was vested in the officers of the general student-body, and all funds passed into and out of a general treasury. The Hoover system of student-affairs management prevails in the university to-day.

In later years, as trustee of the university, he was the initiating figure in reorganizing the handling of all the institution's many million dollars' worth of properties, and so his organizing genius is evidenced to-day at Stanford both in the management of student activities and in the handling of the financial affairs of the whole university.

But the work that he did in his student days that paid him best, because it brought him more than money, was that which he did partly for and partly at the recommendation of his "major" professor, Dr. John Caspar Branner, a great geologist and remarkable developer of geological students.

Doctor Branner has been one of Stanford's greatest assets from the day of its opening in all his successive capacities as professor, vice-president, and president, and he still wields a benign influence on the institution as resident professor and president emeritus. It was the particular good fortune of young Hoover to find that his early decision to become a mining engineer, like the wonderful man who had visited him in Newberg, led him, when he came to the university, into the classroom and laboratories of this kind and discerning scholar.

Doctor Branner quickly discovered "good material," something that he was always looking for, in this industrious, intelligent and ambitious Quaker boy; and Herbert Hoover found in his major professor not only a teacher, but a friend, who, in both relations, has had a great influence, all for the best, in his life. It is an interesting illumination of the democracy of American education to note that while the professor became the university's president, the student became one of its trustees.

Practical Geology

THE first money-earning work that student Hoover did for Doctor Branner, except for various little jobs about the laboratory or office, was a summer's work on a large topographic model of Arkansas which that state was having prepared by Doctor Branner, after a new method devised by him. Part of this summer was spent in the field of Arkansas and the rest of it wrestling with the model in the basement of the professor's house.

Two summers were spent in work with the United States Geological Survey in the California Sierras around Lake Tahoe and the American River, under Waldemar Lindgren, one of the greatest of American scientific mining engineers. This work was on the relations of the famous Sierra placer-gold deposits to the original gold-bearing veins and lodes, and resulted in tracing these comparatively recent placers back to the old mountain slopes and valleys. It was a fascinating problem successfully carried through. In addition, the young geologist's association with Lindgren, whose standards of personal character and regard for the dignity and ethics of his profession were of the highest, was a source of further valuable education.

All this summer activity was of value to young Hoover, not only for the help it afforded him in his struggle for existence, and for the outdoor exercise it involved, but for the practical experience in geological work which it gave him to mix in with

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Photo by Crandall's, Cuty.

Part of the geology class at Stanford University in the pioneer days. Herbert Hoover stands second from the left.

his lecture-room and laboratory acquisitions and to test them by. He seemed to have no difficulty in getting all of this kind of work he had time to do. In fact, some of the other students used to speak a little enviously and suggestively about "Hoover's luck" in this connection.

Dr. Branner happened to overhear some remarks of this kind from a group around a laboratory-table one day and promptly broke out on them in his forcible manner.

"What do you mean," he said, "by talking about Hoover's luck? He has not had luck; he has had reward. If you would work half as hard and half as intelligently as he does, you would have half his luck. If I tell any one of you to go and do a thing for me, I have to come around in half an hour to see if you have done it. But I can tell Hoover to do a thing and never think of it again. I know it will be done. And he doesn't ask me how to do it, either. If I told him to start to Kamchatka to-morrow to bring me back a walrus-tooth, I'd never hear of it again until he came back with the tooth. And then I'd ask him how he had done it."

A Teacher and Friend

DR. BRANNER was as kind to his boys as he was stern when sternness was needed. Hoover came down with typhoid in his junior year, just at a time when his finances could not afford such an expensive luxury. So Dr. Branner sent him to a hospital and saw that he was cared for by the best of physicians and nurses and told him to forget about paying for it all until after he had graduated. And that probably meant that the good professor had to go for some time without buying books, which was what he did with all his extra money.

Another unfortunate illness was announced to the busy student by an outbreak of little red spots on his body, which were declared by the college physician to be the result of poison-oak. All geology students at Stanford get constant little vacations because of poison-oak. But after he had carried his poison-oak spots about with him in the dormitory for several days, Stanford suffered its first epidemic of measles. Unfortunately young Hoover's neglected case affected his eyes to such an extent that for several years afterward he had to wear glasses. And out of this grew the familiar Stanford tradition that Herbert Hoover ruined his eyes while in college by overmuch night work on his studies!

Hoover, twenty-four, already a famous mining engineer, discoverer and manager of one of the most profitable mines in West Australia.

As a matter of fact, Hoover was no college grind. He studied hard enough at what he liked or thought important for fitting himself to be a mining engineer, but he did not dodge getting a few credits from well-known "snap" courses, and he got through other required but, to his mind, superfluous courses without doing more work on them than necessary. He had a disconcerting habit of starting in on a course, and then, if he found it uninteresting or unpromising as a contribution to the special education he was interested in, of simply dropping out of the class without consultation or permission. But he did dig hard into what he thought really counted. His record in the geology department was an unusually high one.

Extra-Curricular Collaborations

BUT with all his work and study he found time for some other kinds of activity. At least the two Irwin boys, Will and Wallace, who were Stanford's most ingenious disturbers of the peace in pioneer days, claim that Hoover, in his quiet, effective way, made a few contributions of his own to the troubles of the faculty. But such contributions from others were generally credited—or rather debited—to the more notorious offenders, so that they had to suffer not alone for their own brilliant inspirations but for those of other less-conspicuous collaborators.

Wallace, for what seemed to the faculty sufficient reason, was, as he has himself phrased it, "graduated by request," while Will had his senior year encored by the faculty, so that it took him five years, instead of the more conventional four, to graduate. In fact, I remember that even as this fifth year was drawing near its close the faculty committee of discipline, of which I was a reluctant member, seriously considered sending Will out in the same way that Wallace had gone. But some of us argued that we should be rid of him soon anyway and without risking the bare possibilities of doing him an injustice. So Will Irwin is to-day one of Stanford's best known alumni.

Herbert Hoover's haunting trouble all

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through his college course was that unpassed entrance requirement in English Composition. Indeed, he did not pass in it until about a week before he graduated, although he tried it regularly every semester all through his four years. He was thus, although not the only one in his anomalous position, a candidate for graduation before he was really a freshman in full standing! How he finally got his passing mark has been told me by Mrs. Hoover. She knows, because she was there through most of the long agony.

The Near-"Flunk"

AFTER failing regularly at each semester's trial, principally, he thinks (although Mrs. Hoover does not entirely agree), because he always had to take it under a particularly meticulous instructor, his predicament began to worry even his professors in the geology department. It looked as if their star student might not be allowed to graduate. Finally a date was set by the English department for a last trial only a week before the end of his senior year.

A day or two before this date the professor of paleontology, J. P. Smith, famed not only for his erudition but for his especial kindness to all geology students—if they did well in paleontology—came to the worrying senior with a paper that Hoover had written some time before on a paleontological subject, and said to him: "Look here, you will never pass that examination in the state you are in. Take this paper; it's fine. Copy it in your best hand; remember that handwriting goes a long way with professors of English, look up every word in the dictionary to be sure you have got the right one; then put in all the punctuation marks you ever saw, and bring it back to me." Hoover did it.

Then Professor Smith disappeared with the paper in his study, but soon came out with it, abundantly blue-penciled. "Now take it and recopy it with all these indicated changes, and bring it back again." Again the interested senior obeyed his mentor. Then the professor left the laboratory with the paper in his hand. Hoover waited his return with ever-increasing interest. Pretty soon he came back with a cheerful smile, handed Hoover the paper, and said: "Well, you're passed; although you probably don't deserve it."

Professor Smith, it seems, had carried the paper, not to the fatal instructor, but to the head of the English department and had said to him: "See here; your instructor is holding up the best man we have from graduating. Now look at this paper of Hoover's. Is there anything the matter with it? Doesn't it make good sense? Isn't it well written? Isn't it well punctuated?"

The English head glanced over it impatiently—he was translating Dante, his dearest recreation, at the moment—and then roared out: "Well, it looks all right. I suppose Instructor X has to live up to his rules, but if the boy can do this well for you it's good enough for us." And with his Dante pencil he wrote a large "Passed for English 1B" across the paper.

Some way all this does not sound like an account of university life at Harvard. Nor does Professor J. P. Smith, who used to interrupt his lecture to wake up a dozing student with a sharp, but kindly, "Here, Jack, wake up; this is an important point, and I will surely ask about it in examination," seem to be the same type as Professor X of Yale. And most freshmen coming to Princeton would hesitate a little before taking the advice of some workman about the campus to go, with bag and trunk, to the president's house in search of board and lodging.

But as I said at the beginning, Stanford was different. It is precisely because it was that Hoover's particular college experiences and acquisitions were what I have tried to suggest, and not what you might think they would be from your knowledge of other universities. And while Stanford has converged somewhat with years toward the more usual university type—colleges get more alike as they get older—it has still an atmosphere peculiarly its own.

But it was in the first days that this atmosphere was so very distinctive. Its president and faculty and students, all living closely together in the middle of a great ranch of seven thousand acres of grain-fields, horse-paddocks, and hills where jack-rabbits roamed and coyotes howled, were thrown together into one great family, whose members depended almost entirely on one another for social life. And each department was a special smaller family within the great one. Life was simple and direct and democratic. Real things counted first and most; there was little sophistication. Work was the order of the day, recreations were wholesome.

The geology family was an especially close and happy one. Some of Doctor Branner's former assistants and students had followed him out to California. They were the older members of the family. Almost all of them are now well-known geologists and mining engineers. So also are many of his younger ones. The family went on long tramps and camps together. The region about Stanford is singularly interesting from a geologist's point of view, and in those days it was a *terra* more or less *incognita*. Everybody was discovering things. It was real live geology. Lectures and recitations were illustrated, not by lantern-slides, but by views out of the window and revelations in the field.

And at the same time these young geologists learned real life; they came to know intimately real men and women, all fired with the enthusiasm of a new venture, new opportunities and a high ideal. With all this, Herbert Hoover learned, in particular, one additional very important thing. He learned that a certain unusual girl, beautiful, intelligent and unspoiled, a lover of outdoors, and, as proof of her unusualness, a "major" student in geology, was the girl for him. Having learned this, he decided to marry her. And, later, she decided that he had decided rightly.

Out at the World

AND so with all his experience at earning his living by organizing anything needing organizing, and with his stores of geological lore gained from lecture-room and text-book and field-work and close personal association with his able and friendly professors, and, finally, with the knowledge that he had already found exactly the right girl for him, Herbert Hoover went out from Stanford, in 1895, with his pioneer class, ready to open his oyster. But he had only himself to rely on in doing it.

So he began very simply and practically. He went up into the mining region near Grass Valley in the Sierras where he had already studied with Waldemar Lindgren, and became a regular miner, a boy-man, with pick and shovel working long hours underground or sometimes on the surface about the plant. But always he had his eyes wide open and always he was learning. He preferred the underground work because he wanted first to know more about the actual occurrence of the ore in the earth than about the mill processes of extracting the mineral from it.

Here he worked for several months, and gradually rose to the position of night-shift boss or gang foreman. But he began to realize that he was exhausting the learning opportunities of this particular place and kind of work, and so one night, deep down in the mine, when, for sudden lack of ore-cars or power or some other essential, work was held up for the last half-hour of his shift, he went off into a warm corner, curled himself up in a nice clean wheelbarrow and slept away the last half-hour of his pick-and-shovel experience.

Butting into Mining

HE had decided to get into association, some way, with the best mining engineer on the Coast. There was no question about who this was at that time. It was Louis Janin, in San Francisco. So he appeared at Mr. Janin's office, a candidate for a job, any job so that it was a job under Louis Janin.

But the famous engineer, well disposed as he was toward giving intelligent, earnest young men who wanted to become mining engineers a chance, had to explain that not only was there no vacant place in his staff, but that a long waiting list would have to be gone through before Hoover's turn could come. He added, as a joke, that he needed an additional typewriter in his office, but, of course— The candidate for a job interrupted. "All right, I'll take it. I can't come for a few days, but I'll come next Tuesday, say." Janin was a little breathless at the rapidity with which things seemed to get settled by this boyish, very boyish, young man; but as they were apparently really settled he could only say: "All right."

Now the reason that the new typewriter boy could not begin until next Tuesday—this was on a Friday—was that he had in the meantime to learn to write on a typewriter! Trivial matter, of course, in connection with becoming a mining engineer but apparently necessary. So, learning what make of machine he would have to use in the office, he stopped on his way to his room at a typewriter-shop, rented a machine of proper make, and by Tuesday had learned to use it—after a fashion.

That kind of boy could not remain for long merely a typewriter operator in the office of a discerning man like Louis Janin. Perhaps certain idiosyncracies of spelling—not yet wholly discarded, by the way—and a certain originality of execution on the machine helped bring about a change of duties.

But chiefly it was because of a better reason. This reason was made especially clear by an incident connected with an important mining case in which Janin was serving as expert for the side represented by Judge Curtis Lindley, famous mining lawyer of San Francisco. The papers which indicated the line of argument

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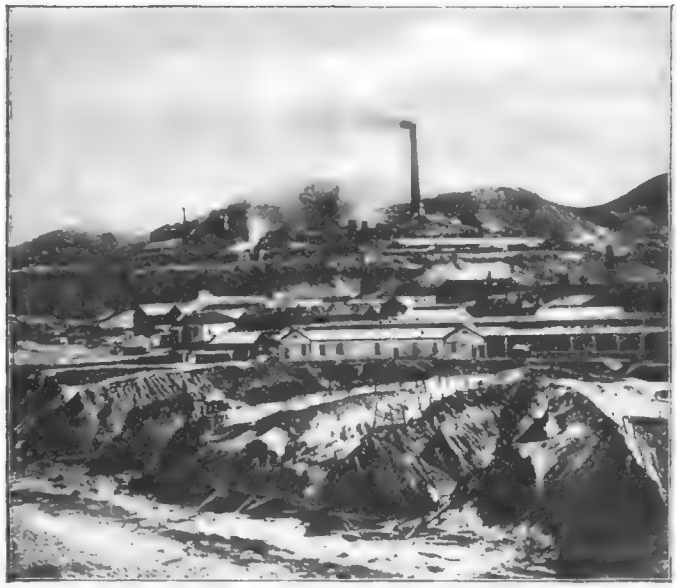

One of the most famous of the Australian gold-mines.

Two thousand feet underground in the gold-mines of Johannesburg

which Judge Lindley and Mr. Janin were intending to follow came to Hoover's desk to be copied.

As he wrote he read with interest. The mine was in the Grass Valley region that he knew so well. He not only copied, but he remembered and thought. The result was that when the typewriter boy delivered the papers to the mining engineer they were accompanied by the casual statement that the great expert and the learned attorney were all wrong in the line of procedure they were preparing to take! And he proceeded to explain why, first to Mr. Janin's indignant surprise and next to his great interest.

The outcome was that Janin and his new boy went around together to Judge Lindley's office, where, after due deliberation, it was decided that the boy was right. The line of argument was accordingly altered. The further outcome was that the boy parted from his typewriter, first to begin acting as assistant to various older staff men on trips to various parts of the Coast for mine examinations, then to make minor examinations alone, and finally to handle bigger ones.

In the Open

LOU HENRY'S letters from the young engineer came now in swift succession from Nevada, Wyoming and Idaho, and then very soon after from Arizona and New Mexico. Little mines did not require much time for examination, and reports signed "Hoover" came into Janin's office with bewildering rapidity. Janin liked these reports. They not only showed geological and mining knowledge, but they showed a shrewd business sense. The reporter seemed never to lose the perspective of cost and organization possibilities in relation to the probable mineral richness of the prospects. And the reports said everything they had to say in very few and very clear words.

Herbert Hoover was not only moving fast, he was learning fast, and he was rising fast in Janin's estimation. He had a regular salary or guarantee now, with a certain percentage of all the fees collected by Janin's office from the properties he examined. What he was earning now I do not know—Mr. Hoover is less interested in talking about salaries than about work—but we may be sure it was considerably more than the forty-five dollars a month which he had begun with as typewriter boy a few months before.

The work was not entirely limited to the examination of prospects and mines. In one case at least it included actual mine development and management. Mr. Janin had in some way taken over, temporarily, for such work was not much to his liking—he preferred to be an expert consultant rather than a mine manager—a small mine of much value but much complication near Carlisle, New Mexico. This he turned over to his enterprising assistant to look after.

It was Hoover's first experience of the kind, and it was made a rather hectic one by conditions not technically a regular part of mining. The town, or "camp," was a wild one, with drunken Mexicans having shooting-bees every pay-day and the local jail established at the bottom of an abandoned shaft, not too deep, into which the prisoners were let down by windlass and bucket. It was an operation fairly safe enough if the sheriff and his assistants were not too exhilarated to manage the windlass properly, or the malefactors too drunk to hang on to the bucket. Otherwise, more or less regrettable incidents happened. Also it led to a rather puzzling situation when the sheriff had to take care of his first woman prisoner, a negro lady of generous dimensions and volubility.

But the mine was well managed and Hoover acquired more merit with his employer. And soon came the new chance which led to much bigger things. It was now the spring of 1897, two years after Hoover's graduation, and the time of the great West Australia mining boom. English companies were sending out many engineers, old and young, to investigate and handle mining properties in the new field, and were looking everywhere for competent men. Janin was asked by one of these London firms to recommend some one to them.

He talked it over with Hoover, telling him that it might be a great opportunity. It might of course not be; it would depend on the prospect—and the man who handled it. Janin expressed his entire confidence in the young man before him, and his belief that the opportunity was greater than any the Pacific Coast then had to offer. He would be more than glad to keep Hoover with him, but he wanted to be fair to him and his future. The young man was all for giving hostages to fortune, and so the recommendation, the offer and the acceptance flew by cable between San Francisco and London, and Hoover prepared to start at once to England for instructions, as had been stipulated in the offer.

Youth and Opportunity

JUST before he started, however, Janin caused him some uneasiness by saying: "Now look here, Hoover, I have cabled London swearing to your full technical qualifications, and I am not afraid of your letting me down on that. But these conservative Londoners have stipulated that you should be thirty-five years old. I have wired that I was sorry to have to tell them that you are not quite thirty-three. Don't forget that my reputation depends on your looking thirty-three by the time you get to London!" And Hoover had not yet reached his twenty-third birthday, and looked at least two years younger even than that. He began growing a beard on his way across the continent.

The London firm had stipulated, too, that their new man should be unmarried. Hoover was still that, although he had begun to get impatient about what seemed to him an unnecessary delay in carrying out the decision already made in college. As a matter of fact, there was still no definite engagement between him and the girl of the geology department, but there was an informal understanding that some day there would be a formal one. However, both agreed that it was not yet quite marrying-time.

So Hoover appeared before the head of the great London house—perhaps the greatest mining firm in the world at the time—without encumbering wife and with the highest recommendations, but with a singularly youthful appearance for an experienced mining engineer of thirty-five. In fact, the great man, after staring hard at his new acquisition, burst out with English directness: "How remarkable you

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"I regret exceedingly your unseemly plight, my dear Butler," said the President, flicking his cigaret.

For the Honor of Sam Butler

By Roland F. Andrews

EVEN in these days of brotherhoods, treaties, alliances and businesslike fruit companies, many things of an untoward nature may befall along that coast which lies just north of the Zone police. In profusion they had befallen Mr. Sam Butler. He was in jail. In matters of sanitation, dietetics and social relation, the jail was as complete in its discomforts as any in which the ill-advised visitor to these parts is confined, until his consul gets him out and on board a banana boat, or the prevailing government gets him out and against a wall.

A particular feature of Mr. Butler's outlook was that, his consul having washed his hands of him—Mr. Butler's offenses were distinctly non-political—he viewed the wall as a not unremote probability. The view from his small window showed the adjacent territory equipped with walls to a superlative degree. Further, Mr. Butler was penniless, untidy and apparently deprived of any opportunity to employ his usual helpful resourcefulness. It gave him no pride that he was of such distinction as to receive personal visits from the President. Yet in this there was hope: Mr. Butler fancied he understood the President.

The President was unusual. His forebears had arrived with Davila Pedrarias. The subsequent line had raised cacao and revolution within the republic, largely that it might raise other crops in Paris. The President himself had been highly developed mentally in a university noted for its eleven and its crew. He revealed the progress of race. Retaining the direct tendencies of the Pedrarians in dealing with those toward whom he felt a spirit of uncordiality, he had refined and expanded their practises under the beneficent influences of modern culture. Stories in which Mr. Butler did not wholly disbelieve were that certain of those of whom he had disapproved had been eaten alive by ants and fed to Johnny Crows. He desired to be generally esteemed. His known enemies were few in number; he saw to that as a matter of policy.

"I regret exceedingly your unseemly plight, my dear Butler," said the President, flicking his cigaret. "Your health appears to be declining. Your somewhat distant native land has abandoned interest in your affair. You lack so much as a peso to sully the honor of my faithful guards"—here the President smiled amiably at the sentry—"who, as true patriots, would naturally anticipate a sudden and unpleasant dissolution should anything occur to make possible your getaway. You seem to the eye uncleanly, and you give the same impression to the nostril. And I am forced to admit, although the admission gives me great pain, that your continued maintenance at the public cost is becoming an unjustifiable charge against the resources of the republic I have the honor to serve. It grieves me."

"Look here—" began Mr. Butler.

"Pardon," the President waved a graceful hand. "If I mistake not, you are perspiring heavily, my dear Butler. A most irritating condition, I have no doubt. It indicates a superfluity of adipose tissue; indeed, in your case, a very great superfluity of adipose tissue. May we not anticipate relief through a treatment which will bring about your reduction to, say, the purely osseous elements of your structure. You would be much cooler my dear Butler."

"Look here," protested Mr. Butler again. "I——"

"I came to give myself the privilege of looking, my dear Butler. As a subordinate purpose I came also to remind you, for perhaps the last time, that when I advised you to keep yourself very much removed from my private preserves I was deeply sincere. Your privilege of mingling in the vigorous politics of the times is not seriously disputed by me, although possibly a matter of concern to your insurance company. But when through collusion with our late friend, the collector of the port, you begin to divert from the natural coffers to yourself a portion of this sovereign country's financial return; when you induce the army paymaster to have himself defrauded by interests other than those by which it was officially designated he should be defrauded; when you retain for yourself most deceitfully an undue share of the price for the fruit line's harbor concession, you hornswoggle a proud and sensitive government, my dear Butler. You render yourself liable to drastic punishment under its exemplary laws. You butt in on me personally. You annoy me. That is why you are here, my dear Butler—and that is why you are likely not to be here very long."

This time Mr. Butler overbore interruption. "Look here," he said. "Talk business. What is there in it for you if you bump me off? Nothing."

"A reward," mused the President, "exactly equivalent to that I should gain by not bumping you off."

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The protestations and lamentations of Señor Zacopa fell like rain.

Mr. Butler wriggled. "Let me make a proposition," he urged, "and then be sport enough to take a chance—a good chance. You know me. You know that I may play 'em a little close to the cushion now and then, but you know I never welch. I made that reputation as long ago as the Guttenberg track was running, and I've never lost it. When I say I'll pay, I do pay. Always have, always will. That's my hookum. Always settle. You know that. Ain't it so?"

The President nodded. "Candor compels me to admit, my dear Butler," he agreed, "that this has ever been one of your engaging, if inexplicable eccentricities."

"Just so," Mr. Butler pressed on. "Now here's the proposition; a sound, perfectly legitimate proposition. You've got me trimmed good and proper. You've had your fun. It won't get you anything to go any further; not a thing. Now lay off me. Put me aboard the *Almirante* out there. Let me get back to the States. And as soon as I can clear five thousand I'll send you a draft for it. There you are. Croak me—nothing. Lay off me—five thousand. And you can use five thousand gold pretty handy."

The President studied him smilingly. "But why do you not make the consideration ten thousand, or even twenty-five thousand? We may assume, may we not, that the article under consideration of purchase is worth a handsome sum, and the collateral as adequate for one figure as another. Why not thirty thousand or fifty thousand, my beloved friend?"

"Because," Mr. Butler answered promptly. "I'm not sure I can raise that big money, and you're sure I can't, and I'm sure you're sure I can't; but five thousand I can, and you know I can, and there we are. Only chance you take is that I get run over by a flivver or fall down an elevator shaft before I can put it in the mail for you. Talk business if you're a business man, or send for the undertaker."

"My delightful, ingenious Butler," said the President, rising; "there is a certain charm in your simultaneous appeal to my sense of logic, and my sportsmanly love of hazard, not to mention, of course, my well known inclinations toward tenderness and mercy. There will be undeniable interest in noting whether, under the enchanting spell of distance, you are able to remain in adherence to the excellent code of your past career which you have cited and which, I may inform you, I believe to be a thing of actual existence. Moreover, since, with a minor exception soon to be eliminated, your material holdings in this nobly administered republic are already under forfeit, there is, as you say, small national advantage to be gained by making your detention within our borders inanimately permanent. It pleases me to take the chance you propose, my alert Butler. At a trifling increase of the hazard I shall even add slightly to its zest."

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He beckoned the governor of the cuartel. "Five minutes after I am gone, confiscate Señor Butler's clothes. They are naturally nationalized with his other belongings. Then confer upon him the priceless boon of liberty. Still five minutes later, if you find him upon our shores, have him thoroughly shot. The *Almirante*, my vigorous Butler, is lying, if I estimate the distance correctly, about one-half mile out. I have been told that violent disturbance of the water tends to deter the sharks from attack."

The President paused at the door. "It may interest you to learn, my dear Butler, that the disposition of your future I have just indicated is the disposition I had in mind when I did myself the honor to call upon you. The one variation from the original plan is to be found in your volunteered donation of five thousand dollars. I most thoroughly believe in that five thousand, my dear Butler. You never welch, you know. My most enjoyable and diverting friend, *adios!*"

IT WAS under such circumstances that Mr. Butler departed from a land of eternal sunshine and tropical languor. Ten days later he landed in New York and, although garbed only in a suit of dungarees, looked upon the melting snow piles with delight. The second-engineer's nickel carried him to the abiding-place of Mr. Mo Harris, who received him without surprise and with the incurious hospitality common to his kind.

"I want a front," proclaimed Mr. Butler, pointing at his apparel, "and seventeen baths, and something to eat without weevils in it. And then I want to pay him, and get him—get him good."

"Who?" asked Mr. Harris.

For minutes, employing the necessary qualifying adjectives, Mr. Butler named the descendant of the Pedrarians who ruled as chief magistrate of the republic to the south. "And I've got to square him with five thousand," he concluded.

"Well," said Mr. Harris. "Business is good. There's plenty doing. But it seems a fool way to waste the money."

Mr. Butler resumed his discourse. He dwelt at length upon the quality of his honor and the luck which followed it as established at Guttenberg and in other strange localities, and he dwelt at even greater length upon the quality of his bitterness.

At intervals during the ensuing days, as he regained his normal rotundity of figure, and took on his normal outward appearance of exceeding prosperity, he returned to these subjects. They remained with him as favorite themes of speech, as he and Mr. Harris, journeying along life's pathway together, conducted exercises of promotion in the matter of sundry properties reputed to be well saturated with oil; stimulated, through the media of handbooks, expressions of opinion concerning the relative speed of race-horses; and with Oriental assistance, advanced at a seaside resort the healthful sport of Japanese ping-pong, wherein according to the prospectus each participant sustaining his skill to the extent of ten cents was made sure of a prize exceeding in value at least two and one-half times that sum.

Unhampered by the cares which had so weighed upon him in his tropical ventures, Mr. Butler grew sleek and visibly impressive. He regained an old-time social standing with waiters and with gentlemen of sharply pressed trousers and sharply chiseled features who loitered of afternoons on the principal thoroughfare. Nevertheless his necessary expenditures continued to absorb the major portion of his income. He could foresee no immediate prospect of discharging either debt in which he felt bound to the Pedrarian magistrate ruling in serenity beyond the tropic of Cancer.

"But," said Mr. Butler, "I'll get that five thousand, and I'll get him. I never welched yet, did I, Harris?"

Mr. Harris agreed that Mr. Butler had not.

In such spare periods as his various interests permitted, Mr. Butler frequented a little group of hotels which lie in an oasis within the city's more ancient section, specialize in the proper treatment of the alligator pear, and incline toward the employment of clerks possessing a knowledge of Spanish.

In these he cultivated acquaintance with a gracious affability tempered by dignity of manner and revealed a connection with great affairs, obviously expansive, yet obviously of a most confidential nature. He knew the patronage of these hotels, did Mr. Butler.

To them, the white-painted fruit-boats brought many guests whose relations, cordial or otherwise, had been most intimate with the prevailing governments of their native countries south of the first tropic. He felt a conviction that sooner or later these would include a visiting brother from the free and unterrified land whose executive had treated him with such contumely. And from such a one he felt that much might be gained; perhaps only increased knowledge; perhaps opportunity; not impossibly something of direct materialistic value in connection with payment of the five-thousand-dollar debt demanded by his code, to the once near and dear executive he had so gladly left behind. Mr. Butler knew enough of the Latin-American temperament to know that one never knows what will happen next, and that if one is swift in finding out about it one may often reap advantage. So he dispensed a generous hospitality and diffused an even more generous atmosphere.

OFTEN he sat in polite converse with olive-skinned gentlemen who wore their Panama hats unblocked, and whose shoes were marvelously pointed; he was sought out by bell-boys bearing word that dignitaries and departments of governments at Washington desired consultation with him over the telephone. Sometimes Mr. Butler disappeared at once in the direction of the telephone-booths. Sometimes he merely bade the messenger inform the dignitaries and the departments that he was not yet ready to enlighten them. In either case he bestowed a liberal fee.

The olive-skinned gentlemen murmured of him in tones of respect. Mr. Butler, although unknown by name and only hazily identifiable, was to them a man of much, if mysterious, consequence. His disinterestedness might have been judged by the fact that he never suggested their investment in oil stocks, never mentioned the differences of opinion prevailing in the matter of horse-races, never advanced the claims of Japanese ping-pong as superior in recreative powers to cock-fighting.

Instead he gravely discussed problems of statecraft and international relations with Señores Perez, Aznar, Calderon, Gomez and Chamorro, carefully considering their governmental perplexities and sparing the time to advise thereon, although invariably interrupted in such conferences by the clear-voiced bell-boys announcing the telephonic requests for his counselings to assist his own great government in Washington. His acquaintance extended daily. Señores Perez, Aznar, Calderon, Gomez and Chamorro were most eager to present to their fellow Latins desiring guidance, their highly connected friend. He became privy to the affairs, actual or in process of manufacture, of a half-dozen rising young nations. He sympathized, he cautioned, he commended. Also he planned and he scrutinized the personnel of each incoming passenger-list. And at last his patient industry was rewarded in full.

Came a day when Mr. Butler returned from his hotel tour in a violent state of excitement and hilarity, waltzed recklessly about the office of Harris & Butler, Investments, the same being also the office of the Coquimbo Oil Co., Ltd., the Texas Products Petroleum Corporation, the Bocas Terminal Development Association, Mutual, and the Arrow Confidential Information Agency, threw his hat at the electrolier, kicked over a chair and addressed Mr. Harris as "Admiral."

Mr. Harris made the necessary inquiries.

"It's come!" caroled Mr. Butler, seeking another chair upon which to vent his joy. "It's come! His sucker's here, and I'll get him and get his and we'll get ours!" He added divers other sounds of thanksgiving.

Mr. Harris suggested the talking of sense.

THUS exhorted, Mr. Butler attained such measure of control as to permit explanation in detail. It appeared that the republic, within the borders of which he had endured so much of annoyance and distress, had indulged itself once more in revolution. It appeared further that this revolt differed from those recently adorning the pages of the republic's history in that the President had found it impossible to accomplish the extinction of revolution and revolutionists with his customary promptness and despatch. On the contrary, as Mr. Butler vividly related, he had been chased back up into the mountains where, with the empty satisfaction of retaining the capital, he had the pain of viewing the sons of the new liberty in possession of the port which paid the dividends. Attempts of his somewhat loyal forces to regain this desirable territory from the rear had failed disastrously. It had become obvious that the only hope for the restoration of lawful authority lay through artillery attack from the sea. Unfortunately, although possessing a fully titled navy department, the President had neither marine ordnance nor craft whereon to float it.

"So," said Mr. Butler. "He's sent up his *Secretario de Marina*, a hick from the coffee country that never saw a bumboat and never saw me, to buy him a ship and go down there and blow his revolution off the beach. The hick's got the money. I've seen it. And I've got the hick hooked. Do you get me?"

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"I think," announced Mr. Butler, "we'll look over the ship.

Mr. Harris said that in completeness he did not.

"We sell him the navy," announced Mr. Butler with fine simplicity.

Mr. Harris cast an eye at the mural decorations setting forth the merits of the Coquimbo Oil Co., Ltd.,and the Texas Products Petroleum Corporation.

"Just now," he observed, "we ain't got much navy in stock."

"Ain't?" snorted Mr. Butler. "We're citizens of the United States, ain't we? We pay taxes—poll taxes and income taxes, if they see us and we've got 'em—don't we? And that means we own our share of the United States Navy. What we own we can sell. Nobody's figuring on sticking him for a whole fleet." Mr. Butler's vision traveled to the wall testimonials of Coquimbo and Texas Products. "As far as goods go, we ain't got much oil," he pointed out; "but we sell some."

Mr. Harris displaying signs of intelligent comprehension, Mr. Butler outlined with minuteness the plan of campaign. From time to time Mr. Harris nodded approval, while Mr. Butler interrupted the thread of his discourse with such ejaculations as "Call me his dear Butler, would he?" "Talk about my osseous structure, would he?" "Take my clothes and feed me out for shark-bait and trim me for five thousand, would he? The yellow-hided skin! I'll get him and I'll get him good. I never welched yet, did I, Harris?"

Mr. Harris said that such had never been the case.

"And he'll find I'm not welching now," concluded Mr. Butler. "But remember the main squeeze of this play has got to be put over outside New York. Detroit, I think, I'll stage it in. Too many fly secret-service men left over from the war around here. And the way I dope it, our part of the United States Navy is usually lying about opposite Belle Isle. I'll handle that end of it. All you've got to do is stay here and keep the home fires burning. All clear?"

Rising to remove certain framed statements concerning the oil industry from the wall, Mr. Harris said it was.

On the following afternoon Mr. Butler, accompanied by a small dark gentleman upon whom he had enjoined a degree of caution, approached what had been the office of Harris & Butler, Investments, but which now bore upon the glass of its door only a hastily executed national coat-of-arms surmounting the single letter "N," below which was the inscription "Private." Within sat Mr. Harris, clad somewhat startlingly in what had once served as the uniform of a captain of the Fall River Line, and decorated on the left breast with divers ribbons. Mr. Harris was surrounded by photographs of formidable-looking vessels; his desk showed an array of telegrams and official letters. He was absorbed, as Mr. Butler and his companion entered, in a blue-print volume of marine design.

"Admiral Harrison," said Mr. Butler, "I want to introduce to you Señor Zacopa." He followed with a flattering recital of the señor's high estate and then, in a lower voice and with a swift glance about him, a summary of the señor's purposes and desires. "I have told the señor," continued Mr. Butler, "that while, with the war over, your department is quite willing to dispose of a certain number of war-ships, nevertheless this little matter of his is so sort of irregular that it can't appear out in the open at all. I've told him that our people at Washington and all the rest of us feel friendly disposed toward his

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government, and want to do what we can to keep any Bolshevist stuff from starting down around the isthmus, but that naturally anything we do to help him will have to be done confidential and on a strictly cash basis. As I understand it, Admiral Harrison, our instructions from the White House are that we mustn't appear to be interfering in anybody's purely family rows, not even if they're our best friends, and that if we do anything to help the señor here, there mustn't be any correspondence or checks or drafts or things to show in the records."

"Commissioner Butler," responded Admiral Harrison, "you have put the case as well as I could put it myself. I hope, Senor Zacopa, that as a government official and a good business man you understand how it is, because I've just got a code telegram from Washington"—here the Admiral tapped a yellow envelope—"telling me to do everything I reasonably can to help you. They sent me that, of course, because the commissioner"—he bowed gravely to Mr. Butler—"had been wiring down there that you were all right. I'm instructed"—here again he bowed to Mr. Butler—"to put the business end entirely in your hands, Commissioner. Now just about what kind of a ship is the senor wanting?"

In mingled tongues, but with undefiled vehemence, the señor himself explained that his needs were for a craft with battery power which would separate the insurgent contamination of his beloved land into particles of the most excruciating pain and of a fineness to render them indistinguishable from the sands of Puerto Pinzon beach. He explained further that his needs were for the utmost haste.

"H'm'm!" commented Admiral Harrison. He consulted a ponderous volume labeled "A to G"; then another labeled "H to M."

"As a favor," he announced, "we might let you have the *Kearsarge* or the *Kentucky*. They're only second rate, of course, but they're full as good as the *Idaho* and *Mississippi* we helped Greece out with; and being in commission for the Naval Academy squadron we could give 'em to you quick."

Señor Zacopa spoke rapidly in Spanish.

"He wants to know how much," translated Mr. Butler. "Bottom price, now, Admiral."

Admiral Harrison accomplished a bit of arithmetic on a scratch-pad. "Seeing who it's for and unless you think I'm sacrificing too much, Commissioner, we might make it three million each."

ANY assent the commissioner might have in contemplation was prevented by the cries of Señor Zacopa desiring Heaven to witness that in all his beloved fatherland the accursed insurrectos had not left money in such quantity as was now demanded for that fatherland's redemption. It was not his wish to purchase floating continents armored with gold. He required only a small and modest ship, albeit one with pronounced powers of destructiveness. Would Admiral Harrison's republic sit by impassive while his, Señor Zacopa's, republic perished for mere lack of seapower?

Of pained concern almost equal to that of Señor Zacopa was Mr. Butler.

"You don't quite get this situation, Admiral," he protested. "Just let me handle it. The señor doesn't want a battle-ship. It's too big. It wouldn't be any real use to him. He wouldn't take one even if we could give him a long credit, which we can't. What he wants is just a handy little affair to settle this Puerto Pinzon rough-stuff quick and easy, a small cruiser, say, or a gunboat. Now just let me know what we've got on the list in that line."

THE admiral's brows knitted. He consulted another volume. "Most of our little fellows we're using now," he regretted, "and of late years we didn't build much but heavy-weights. We might let him have the *Columbia*"—he pointed a thumb toward the photograph of a three-funneled craft with a ram bow and an eight-inch rifle on her after-deck—"but I don't think Washington would authorize even you, Commissioner, to let her go for less than a million. We got some boats in the Philippines, but they're too far away. Honest, Commissioner, I don't see just what we're going to do. Of course the señor here might go to the Blunts or somebody and buy a merchantman. Perhaps even the Shipping Board might let him have one. You've got influence there, Commissioner, but"—the Admiral's voice trailed in sadness—"even if they did, I don't think we could get Washington to let him take any guns out of the country on her. No, sir, I know we couldn't. I'm afraid we haven't got a thing to help the señor out. He'll have to go to England or——"

The protestations and lamentations of Señor Zacopa fell like rain. Only a navy could stand between his beloved and eventually-to-be-triumphant country and ruin. A navy there must be. Otherwise not only was his beloved country a ruin, but he, Señor Zacopa, was also a ruin. So much of ruin was not to be borne, not by the world, not even by him, Señor Zacopa. The plight was desperate. A ship must be had. In such extremity he would buy even the cruiser of one million dollars. But there must be credit—much credit.

The admiral shook a sorrowing head.

Señor Zacopa began afresh. But with the señor's restart there came to Mr. Butler a great and marvelously alleviating inspiration.

"Stop!" he cried. "Admiral, how about the *Wolverine*?"

Admiral Harrison laid down his pencil and gazed at Mr. Butler in open admiration.

"Well, now, who but you would have thought of her, Commissioner?" he complimented. "Yes sir, you've hit it. I'm empowered to let the *Wolverine* go if you say the word. But seeing she's on the Lakes, and kind of out of my eye, I'd clean forgot her. I guess I didn't even have her on the sale books. Yes, sir, she's just about the boat for the señor, and seeing she's small and he's a friend of yours we can let her go at a bargain. Your friend can have the *Wolverine* for a little matter of seventy-five thousand dollars if he don't mind bringing her round. Let's see"—he consulted a fourth book of his library. "She's at Detroit now, and my professional advice is to close the deal and get her quick before Washington moves her up to Superior. She's a bargain for your work, that *Wolverine* is, Señor. It's lucky for you the commissioner remembered her. I congratulate you!"

Señor Zacopa chattered delight. Since to Mr. Butler's almost certain knowledge the señor's funds for naval purchase totaled one hundred thousand dollars, the reasons for his satisfaction were perhaps both patriotic and personal. Mr. Butler himself assumed a look of modest competency. "I told the señor I'd get him a boat," he explained; "told him I'd get him one if I had to go to Washington and see the President himself. And I meant it. I never welched yet, did I, Admiral?"

Admiral Harrison said that Mr. Butler had never so done.

"And I never will. You can tell your own President that when you get home, Señor. And now to close the deal up, as the admiral says, I want you to take the train for Detroit with me to-night. We don't want any chance for misunderstandings or misrepresentations about this thing. I want you to see the *Wolverine* for yourself, and make sure she's just what you need, although the admiral here can tell you that she's A-1. We'll have to hurry, Señor. The train's at five. And the trip's on me—on the Government, that is."

ABOARD the New York Central express Mr. Butler explained convincingly the vastness of the Great Lakes, and the route which must be followed by the purchased craft *en route* to the scene of her future activities.

"Ordinarily," said Mr. Butler, "we'd run her through the Welland and out by the St. Lawrence, but seeing you're in a hurry I'll arrange, if we make this dicker, to take her through the Chicago Canal and down the Mississippi, turning her over to you all nice and quiet at New Orleans. Maybe, too, we can fix it up to let some of the men go along with her, and fight her until you get your own navy working regular. You're lucky to get this chance, Señor."

The señor most thoroughly believed that he was. He became even more fixed in that belief when Mr. Butler, skilfully piloted by a taxi-driver through the fan-spreading maze of Detroit, drove him far out Jefferson Street, and stopping the vehicle suddenly, showed him, snow-white of iron flank and ponderous of ancient clipper stern, the U. S. S. *Wolverine* moored close to the shore just above the bridge which leads to Belle Isle. Most venerable of all the world's naval craft of the active list, built far back before even the Mexican War, for service, as the one warship permitted under the terms of the treaty, to hold the Lakes clear against a possibly outrageous Canada and a marauding England, this ancient of the waters, broad-beamed and wall-sided, had circled Johnson's Island to keep a watchful eye on Confederate prisoners during the rebellion, had tested the seamanship of many a future flag-officer, had endured the educational development of the Lake States naval militiamen, and had done her share in the last great conflict, serving as mothership to the little scout-boats which saw that the great ore-freighters came through narrow channels without menace of the German secret agent. Now as she lay at anchor her great paddle-wheels seemed to speak to Señor Zacopa of the mightiness within her loins. Her open ports

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promised blasts of destruction. The ensign snapping at her taffrail told him she held the respect and carried the honor of a nation which never yet made mistake at sea. She was indeed the ship of his desires.

Mr. Butler studied carefully the pennants at the *Wolverine's* spreaders. He had been at some pains to learn the language of these. They were of consequence. They told, for instance, who was on board and who was not. They told when visiting was permitted. Mr. Butler found their present information satisfactory.

"Just the ideal boat for you, Señor," he assured. "Come aboard and let me show her to you."

He led the way to the chain ferry which covered the brief space between the port gangway and the little wooden pier.

Well schooled and well prepared was Mr. Butler. Going over the side, he found, exactly as he had known he should find, a sailorman of rating no greater than that of chief petty officer serving as officer of the deck. Very promptly and in the approved nautical fashion, Mr. Butler saluted, first the quarterdeck and then the C. P. O. Very prompt and very correct was the officer-of-the-deck's double acknowledgment. When he assumed the duties ordinarily performed by commissioned rank, he was most meticulous in the observance of the courtesies. It did not surprise him that this civilian should know the customs of the service. Civilians of late had acquired a commendable knowledge of important things. That was one benefit from the war, anyway. And it did not surprise Señor Zacopa that Mr. Butler should receive honors from a vessel of his navy. But it added to the respect the señor felt for him.

"I think," announced Mr. Butler, "we'll look over the ship."

"Right," said the young C. P. O., shifting his binoculars to his other shoulder. "Glad to have you, sir." And he turned to beckon an apprentice.

"Oh, never mind the boy," directed Mr. Butler. "I know this old wagon pretty well. Just want to show her to my friend."

"Right," said the C. P. O. "Visitors welcome."

So Mr. Butler led the señor forward where the cooks were preparing mess in their galley under the skid-deck, showed him the berthing space in the bows, took him up the ladder to the square wheelhouse with its great hand-wheel and the two young quartermasters, who came to attention, handed him into the depths occupied by the glistening engine with its "1845" on the plates, and even, when he caught a nod of permission from the deck, escorted him into the spacious captain's cabin under the poop.

With a howl of defiance, Mr. Butler hurled the package into the waste-basket and plunged for the door.

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"Everything you need for your work," said Mr. Butler ecstatically. "Everything."

And Señor Zacopa, in a fever of delight, said it was so.

Departing, Mr. Butler was moved to give still more of verisimilitude to his handiwork.

"We like this old *Wolverine* pretty well," he told the C. P. O. jovially. "Just between us—in strict confidence, mind—I'm thinking of selling her to the señor here. What do you say to that?"

The C. P. O. grinned his appreciation of the jest. Another custom of the service was that in visitors' hours the deck answered all questions and laughed dutifully at all humor propounded by taxpayers.

"Well," he returned, "she's been in the family a long while and we'd sort of hate to lose her, but if you're selling off the navy you might as well begin here."

"If I do, Captain" (the C. P. O. was by way of being a gunner), "I'll build you another boat. Will you and the boys deliver her for me if I let her go?"

"Sure thing," smiled the C. P. O. "We're all hungry for action of any kind."

And Señor Zacopa descended to the chain ferry in the faith that should the national emergency so require he could purchase both an ideal ship and an ideal crew to man her. He was of a mood to embrace his benefactor when Mr. Butler, in the retirement of a hotel room, volunteered even further and greater kindnesses.

"SHE'S yours, Señor," felicitated Mr. Butler; "and a bargain you've got, too. I knew you'd want her the minute you saw her, and I wanted you to have her the minute I thought of her. We don't care for any of this revolution business going on in our front yard, we people down in Washington don't; and as for you, I took a liking to you the minute I saw you. I'm funny that way. When I take a liking to a man I go the limit for him. Just to prove it to you, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll shave the price of that *Wolverine*. We'll cut the admiral's figure a mite—cut it just between you and me without saying anything to anybody. She's yours for an even seventy thousand."

Señor Zacopa's burst of gratitude made him spring to his feet.

"But," continued Mr. Butler, "at that price, of course, you'll have to put your own crew on her here at Detroit, and you'll have to do it quick. She'll have to be out of the river within twenty-four hours, or the foreign diplomatic corps will be making trouble and the whole thing will be off."

Señor Zacopa sat down hopelessly.

"Can't manage that?" inquired Mr. Butler. "Well, I'll help you out again. I'll send her along with our own fellows aboard. I'll have her start to-morrow morning—that is, of course, if we can get everything squared up to-night."

The señor nodded assent.

"And the price of delivering her at New Orleans will be just five thousand dollars. I don't mind telling you that if you want to persuade some of our fellows to keep on going farther with her I'll fix it so there won't be anything said at Washington. And"— Mr. Butler stepped quickly to the door, opened it, scanned the hallway, and returned with lower voice—"I don't mind telling you, further, that if you want to call that delivery charge ten thousand when you send your own expense account in, it will be all right with me. I won't say anything. I like you, Señor."

Again the great surge of gratitude swept Señor Zacopa to his feet. Mr. Butler stayed him with a gesture.

"It'll have to be cash down," he reminded. "Actual cash. Can you settle right now, Señor?" Mr. Butler knew to the fraction of an inch the exact location of the señor's money-belt.

MOST fluently the señor gave assurance that the desired settlement could be accomplished at once. Nevertheless, twisting in embarrassment, he was pained, distressed, even desolated, to acknowledge that on his part he must, by order of his superiors, introduce one small formality. He was under the most binding instructions—absurd, of course, and annoying, but yet instructions not to be violated—that in event of purchase from the Government of the United States he should turn over the purchase price only to a duly accredited representative of that Government. For his own part he did not question the status of Mr. Butler, but Mr. Butler himself had pronounced his governmental connection so confidential as to be unofficial. Now if Mr. Butler would have some recognized officer of the Government vouch for him—say the commandant of the little fort down the river—then, indeed, the transaction could be most delightfully concluded at once.

For the moment Mr. Butler was nonplused. The possibility of such delicate hesitancy had not entered into his otherwise complete calculations. But he was of long practise in the instant and agile treatment of emergencies, his nonplused moment of the briefest duration.

"I can't take the army in on this," he explained, "but there's Admiral Harrison."

"Of a perfect satisfaction," agreed Señor Zacopa, "but the admiral, he is not here. Is it that we shall communicate with him and await formal answer?"

"Not necessary," returned Mr. Butler. "We want the *Wolverine* to start and I"—his hand described a grand gesture—"don't really want to handle the money anyway. You've got the cash? Yes. Well, you ship it by express to the admiral right now. I'll watch you do it."

At the door of the express office Mr. Butler again impressed upon Señor Zacopa the prime necessity of secrecy. "You never can tell who is watching," he warned. "Now, of course, it wouldn't do to send this money officially. You can't advertise that a foreign gentleman like you is shipping a bank-roll to an admiral in our navy. You just address that package to 'Mr. M. Harris' at the admiral's office. That's code. He'll get it all right. And just remember, Señor, that all you need to send is seventy-five thousand. That other five thousand for delivery at New Orleans is something known only to you and me. And I sha'n't say anything about it. On that address, now, just 'M. Harris.'"

Once he had seen the money despatched, Mr. Butler removed a considerable quantity of perspiration from his brow and from other portions of his countenance. Then he bade the señor an affectionate farewell. "Not a good idea for us to be seen too much together," he told the gentleman from the languorous south. "You stay here and lay quiet. Keep your eye on the *Wolverine*. Within twenty-four hours, or maybe thirty-six, you'll see her start. Then you take a train to New Orleans. She'll have orders to report to you in person there. After that it's up to you—and give my best regards to your President, won't you? It's a pleasure to do business with him; a real pleasure."

And Mr. Butler, again perspiring, swung himself aboard a train for New York.

Bursting joyously into the ex-office of Harris & Butler, Investments, Mr. Butler interrupted Mr. Harris, once more in civilian dress and minus the added syllable of his name, engaged in dismantlement as though for journeys afield.

"Have you got it?" demanded Mr. Butler.

"Yes," answered Mr. Harris; "I got it. I don't know——"

"You'll know more after I've sent that yellow-hided swindler his five thousand and we're splitting the rest of it two ways. Where is it?"

Mr. Harris pointed at a package on the table. "And here's a night telegraph letter come for you," he said. "It came collect."

MR. BUTLER tucked the package under his arm and ripped open the telegraph envelope. The message was dated at New Orleans:

MY DEAR BUTLER—that is, if you are my identical dear Butler, and from Zacopa's description I think you are: Let me strongly counsel you against the careless employment of the money which, by my instruction, he is turning over to you at Detroit. It is counterfeit, my dear Butler, an excellent counterfeit, but one which I fear you would detect did you have opportunity to examine it at leisure. I acquired it from a compatriot of yours who once visited our country and who now occupies handsome quarters in our national cemetery. You will be glad to know that, doubting the acumen of my faithful navy secretary, I came out by the back way and am supervising affairs in person while dwelling incognito in this attractive city. I have much faith in you, my dear Butler. It may be that you actually possess authority to sell warships for the United States. You worm yourself into the confidence of many executives. And I share one quality with you, my dear Butler. I never welch. When I say I will pay, I do pay. If your ship is actually delivered, I shall send you the purchase price in real money. If it is not delivered, I shall purchase elsewhere, and you will be once again stung, my dear Butler. Give my regards to Admiral Harrison. *Adios.*

It was signed by the executive from whom Mr. Butler had parted in the Puerto Pinzon jail. With a howl of defiance, Mr. Butler hurled the package into the waste-basket and plunged for the door.

"Where you going?" demanded Mr. Harris.

"Going?" thundered Mr. Butler. "Going? I'm going to get a fruit boat off Blunt and a gun off Bannerman and sell the whole business to the opposition and blow up that double-faced crook's navy when he brings it down from New Orleans. That's where I'm going. And I'm going to clear five thousand out of it, too. You know me, Harris. I never welch, do I?"

Mr. Harris fished the package from the waste-basket.

"I dunno," he said.

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The First of the Cuties

By Philip Curtiss

Fred Frayer was making a picture in his back yard out near Webster Avenue, New Rochelle.

IN THAT gray dawn of the movies when the words "biograph" and "kinetoscope" were still occasionally heard, when half the world had not yet learned that "moving pictures" had been invented and the other half had temporarily forgotten it, a man named Frayer was in business in New Rochelle with a capital consisting of a lease on a run-down mansion, twenty years' experience as an old-time stage-manager, a camera which worked fairly well on a sunshiny day, and a remarkable little girl.

When I say that that girl was Toots Fleming, I ought to be able to add that "to-day, of course, all the world knows who she is." But no, let us have this clear right from the start. "Toots Fleming" is not a thin disguise for one of those plutocratic young ladies who spring to the modern mind whenever a "film star" is mentioned. Hers is not even a name which many old-timers will remember. Some of them will remember her face, but that is another matter.

Already the movies have a history, already screen editors are beginning to pry into the dust of "the early days" as if they were two hundred years past instead of a scant twenty-five. If we take their researches as seriously as they do themselves, we may say that the period in which Toots Fleming had her career might be called the late medieval. The prehistoric days when the "kinetoscope" was exhibited as a mechanical marvel were, of course, past, as were the dark ages of exhibitions in concert-halls, opening with a magic-lantern lecture on "Picturesque Cuba" and closing with one or two pictures which really did move—a man feeding ducks, or perhaps that favorite thriller, "The Burning Stable."

Even in Toots Fleming's time pictures were valuable largely as fillers in vaudeville theatres. Views of "Salmon-Fishing on the Columbia River" and "Cherry-Blossom Time in Old Japan" still loomed large in the programs. Comedies still ran heavily to bakers in white aprons and caps, joined by house-painters with ladders and pails, who were in turn joined by gendarmes with cutlasses, all chasing wilful boys or choleric old gentlemen up the stucco streets of nameless French towns.

Perhaps I can best show just where Toots Fleming came in movie history by repeating my statement that, while many old-timers may remember her face, few, if any, will remember her name. The movies had not as yet become a cult. It had hardly dawned on audiences that a person whose image they saw in the pictures had a distinct existence outside the camera. Screen actors and actresses were as anonymous as clowns in the circus, as unreal as illustrations in a book. If they thought about it at all, the spectators probably had a vague idea that the parts were taken by members of the camera-man's family, as indeed they frequently were. Say "Toots Fleming" to one of the earlier devotees and it will mean nothing, but say "that little girl with the ringlets in the old B. & D. pictures," and like as not, the answer will be "Oh, yes, of course!"

Toots Fleming, in short, was the first of the cuties, the first of that long line of sisters who ever since have roused a feminine flutter all through the audience by skipping into the picture with the figure of twenty years and the dress of ten, with plump bare legs, with gingham dresses torn at the shoulder, with tomboy manners for winning the hearts of fabulous heroes and angel-child manners for softening the hearts of incredible villains.

No, Toots Fleming never owned a palatial bungalow in California; her picture was never published in the "artgravure" sections of magazines; she was never called on to vouch for the merits of hair-wash or face-cream; yet, for all I know, she is still alive and exceedingly happy. What did become of her? Well, let us see.

FRED FRAYER, honest soul, was making a picture in his back yard out near Webster Avenue, New Rochelle, and, in those days, making a picture meant literally making it. If Toots Fleming, without knowing it, was the first of the film stars, Fred Frayer was the first of the semi-independent producers without knowing it either.

As a permanent staff of his primitive venture, frugal Fred had, until just before this notable date, employed nobody but his own wife. What few actors he needed he had originally hired by the day, or had even coaxed from the endless groups of unemployed "hams," with most of whom Fred and his wife had ties of relationship as clear to themselves and as baffling to others as those of the Spanish gipsies. As time had gone on, however, and as the films from the New Rochelle mansion had earned a revenue which had surprised nobody more than their makers, the informal crowd of day-workers had gradually crystallized into a group of six or eight men and women who had been found so valuable, or rather so versatile, that by now Fred had about him what could probably be called the first independent company.

Poor, crude little band of pioneers, so familiar eighteen or twenty years ago to those of us who lived out in the general district of Webster and Winyah Avenues! I am afraid that most of you, like all pioneers, did your bit in rough and unthanked obscurity, blazing the way for others to reap the rewards, settling down at last to little more than the mellow and harmless sunset of most old-timers, privileged to prattle on about Nestorian days, smiled at, indulged and forgotten.

But all this time Fred Frayer has been kept waiting over his picture in his back yard in New Rochelle. No matter. Whatever picture he was making is not half as important as the fact that he made pictures at all in those days. Even had we left him there all day or ten days, it would have made little difference. The scene would have remained very much the same, for all of Fred's pictures were built on a pattern curiously standardized. If, on that day, some modern director (still in short jeans) had come in and asked for the script, Fred would have stood off amazed and demanded, "What script?" Fred's scenarios, like his financial affairs, were under his shock of rough, graying hair. When he started a picture he never knew exactly what the plot would be, or rather he always knew, for it was always the same. Like another pioneer in dramatic art who had lived on the banks of the Avon three hundred years before, Fred considered

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filial piety a good enough *motif* for any play. He had used it steadily for two years now, and, if the picture fad lasted that long, intended to use it for twenty-two more.

That was where little Toots Fleming entered the scheme as a basic part of Fred Frayer's working capital. Given Toots as a child or grandchild and given himself as an aged father or grandfather, Fred never gave the scenario business another thought. Why should he? The picture on which he was working now was rapidly getting into the familiar groove, and Fred's spirit was growing correspondingly lighter. It had just occurred to him that the drunken father, with whom Toots was at the moment saddled on the flimsy open-air stage, could prove to be not her real father at all, but that he himself, as an old millionaire, could enter the picture shortly and display the marriage lines which, for some reason or other, the downtrodden mother was sworn not to mention, and which the town-clerk, parson, friends, servants and every one else concerned had conveniently forgotten.

Fred rubbed his hands in the happy glow which all composers have felt when inspiration has pierced the gloom of a slow-moving day. The business was still too young to have much of an argot of its own.

"Come on, now," he said briskly. "We've got to move fast. Susie you get to work on that wash-tub, and Toots, you monkey around pretending to help her. No, not there—*there!* Billy, you go out left and when I yell, you come in just as you did before, only be careful of that property door. It wrinkled that other time. Toots, what you waiting for?"

"I'm waiting for you to begin," answered

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Toots calmly. As usual, she was in calico, and the set was a slovenly cabin room.

"Well, good gosh!" retorted Frayer, "I can't begin until you people begin, can I? You don't want the picture to start with you people just standing around, do you? You start working just as if I was taking it."

"I feel so silly here outdoors," argued Toots.

"Please, Toots, stop fooling," begged Frayer's wife, already doing her earnest and absolutely humorless best over a waterless wash-tub containing half of one sheet. "You know they never come out good after half-past two, even if the sun is shining bright."

"All right," agreed Toots. She went upstage, right, and bent over a basket of clothes, but true to Fred's old-time technique, kept her face strictly toward the audience of one.

With a warning cry, Frayer started the camera.

"Fine!" he yelled. "Keep it up!"

Playing well in her part, Toots picked up the basket of clothes and walked toward the lens.

"There's a bunch of kids watching us over the fence," she remarked, scarcely moving her lips.

"Shut up, shut up!" roared Frayer frantically.

Toots made a half-turn and carried the basket toward the vigorously tubbing Susie. "What's the harm in talking?" she mumbled. "It doesn't show."

"It does too show," retorted Mrs. Frayer, not lifting her head. As Toots put down the basket of clothes beside her, she straightened up and, with all the air of a veteran melodrama dowager, put her hand on the girl's head and smiled, the sweet smile of the heart-broken but still pious stage mother.

"Don't make me laugh," muttered Toots between her closed lips.

"Toots, do something, do something!" roared Fred. "Keep moving!"

At last Toots did the thing which earned her fabulous wage of four dollars a day. Lifting her face to that of Susie, she tossed back her glorious curls, and smiled a smile of angelic innocence. For answer Susie put a trembling hand again on Toots's curls, and shook her own head sadly back and forth five times, as if to say, "Too, too beautiful, and her so young."

"Now, Billy," roared Fred, but the rest of it there is no need to describe. If you are old enough, you have seen it as often as I have. You probably have, anyway. In due and proper order, Billy Mercer, a converted acrobat, entered in his rôle of a drunken father, felled the poor mother with a straight left, and seemed about to call for a decision when Toots rushed up with outstretched arms and, as usual, melted his flinty heart by her childish sweetness.

"THE thing I like about *this* business," remarked Toots, a few minutes later, as she strolled through the bare, echoing halls of the old mansion on her way to the room in which she dressed, "is the hours. As Fred says, there'll probably never be very much money in it, for the actors at least, but think of playing nothing but matinées! Say, I wonder who lived in this old shack before the flood. It must have been a fine house in its time."

It was typical of her day in general and of Toots in particular that, as she put on her street dress, and metamorphosed herself from a rustic child of ten to a *chic* young woman of twenty, the leading lady of Fred Frayer's company felt a sense of stepping out of something rather humiliating.

It was still the middle of a hot August afternoon, and Toots strolled up Webster Avenue in a spirit of discontent which she herself laid to the heat, but which in reality, had an origin much more profound. The heat, as a matter of fact, was nothing terrific, whereas winter or summer, for several years, Toots could scarcely recall a day in which she had been wholly free from this feeling of wanting something and not knowing just what it was. The fact that her spirit of irritation was tending to disappear as she went farther out the avenue might have shown its true cause.

AT THAT time, that end of Webster Avenue and the beginning of Winyah Avenue, to the right, were lined with beautiful old suburban places, with houses built mostly in Tudor style, and set far back in finely kept grounds. They were survivors of a still earlier generation, of a day when that part of New Rochelle had been far in the country, when concourses of traps and dog-carts with blooded hackneys and liveried grooms had formed daily horse-shows on the arrival of the evening train at Rye, Mount Vernon and half a dozen stations along the line. Already the insidious invasion of "development projects" and building-lots and corner drug-stores was creeping up from two directions; but, at that day the district was still untouched.

At Winyah Avenue, Toots should have turned to the right and gone down out of the district again to the little white house in which she boarded; but after a moment of hesitation she turned, and walked slowly back the way she had come. That act in itself gave a certain clue to her real discontent. The truth was that, like every other human girl, Toots was a born lover of luxury, of ease, of distinction, and, walking up and down among those immaculate lawns and old Tudor houses, she felt a sense of them just close enough to soothe her own love of beautiful things and just distant enough to keep discontent still alive.

There is a beauty about a well-kept suburban street that is peculiarly its own. Toots let her feet stray off the pavement into the softer and cooler footing of turf, and let her steps become slower and slower. She had the avenue to herself except for a gardener leaning over a bed of geraniums on one of the lawns. From regions out of sight came the steady click of a lawn-mower and the buzzing shrill of a locust, while over all hung a sickly sweet, sun-baked perfume of something which Toots did not recognize, but which always roused in her vague and romantic dreams. The scent came from box hedges.

Toward the end of the avenue Toots again slowed her steps until she stood still. She was now fully conscious of what was upsetting her. Her hesitation was that of a guilty mind about to do something which it has sworn not to do, but which it has known all the time that it will do just the same. Just as she had known that she would, in spite of herself, Toots took the guilty step. She crossed the street and walked along a low stone wall.

In that there would not seem to be anything very shameful, especially as behind the wall, was a beautiful, soft-green park. But it was shameful, just the same, for far back in the park stood a fine old house, and in the fine old house lived a man—an unmarried man. Toots, remember, was discontented largely because she was exceedingly proud, because she was irritated at the world for not having taken her at her own valuation. In that house lived a rich, famous man, an author, to be exact, and out in the street, looking bitterly at his grandeur, thinking resentfully of his fame, picking, spitefully, bits of mortar out of his wall, stood Toots, rebellious at knowing herself to be nothing but a two-for-a-penny actress in moving pictures—a "kinetoscope queen," as Billy Mercer called her to tease—a shoddy profession in which she had no chance of finding wealth or fame.

The mingled fascination and hatred roused in Toots by the sight of that house had been a matter of gradual growth. It had been one of those strange obsessions so easily formed by a young and homesick person brooding alone in unfamiliar surroundings. Unlike the other members of Fred Frayer's company, Toots had never actually been on the stage; yet, like them, the theatrical world was the only atmosphere she had ever known. She had been, in short, that most pathetic of all semi-orphans, a theatrical child, a boarding-house rat. Her mother, a hopeless, talentless, overworked drudge of a "heavy woman" in third-rate companies, had made the resolve that her daughter should never follow in her own footsteps, but having nothing else to do with her, had dragged her around in her travels, with the result that Toots had known all the shams of the actor's life with none of its inspirations.

TOOTS had no regrets for the world she had left, but as yet she had found no world to replace it. She had no world at all. Her mother had died the previous winter in a hospital in Scranton, and Fred had offered Toots work in his picture company as the only makeshift at his disposal, much as, in other circumstances, he would have found her a position as governess or as some old lady's companion. Although for her fellow actors Toots had little respect, it would have been easy enough for her to be sociable with them; but they, rejoicing in the unexpected opportunity for family life or for Broadway life, scattered the moment their day's work was over and left Toots to her own devices.

Toots's days thus, that long, hot summer, had resolved themselves into working for two or three hours at the studio, walking up Webster Avenue, taking a trolley-ride in the evening, reading the *Dramatic Clipper* and going to bed. The only part of this program which she really enjoyed was the walk up the avenue, and on pleasant days she prolonged this until she knew intimately every house. She even learned, from her garrulous landlady, the names of the people who lived in most of them. From this source she learned that in the biggest—in the one set farthest back in its stately grounds, in the one which, most of all, she admired—lived nobody less than David Blake, the famous author.

The day after she learned that startling fact, Toots lingered long and shamelessly

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at the low stone wall, looking into the deep shaded grounds. She felt no indelicacy in doing this now, for she was no longer looking at a private house, but at a public monument, at an institution. It did not surprise her that an author should live in such a grand house as that. In her day and in her sphere of life it was taken for granted that all those mysterious beings known as authors lived in a regal state. Authors were neither as numerous nor as confidential as they are now. She had never read any of David Blake's books, did not even know their names. Not what he wrote, but the fact that he was an author at all. was the thing that enthralled her. Strange, strange days are those of which I am writing, but of all the pictures which they recall, is any more unbelievable than that of a movie star standing humbly in awe before the house of an author?

Toots had never seen David Blake come out of his house, and she never really expected to. The landlady had told her that no one on the avenue had ever seen that, and that not three persons in New Rochelle knew him by sight. At first this had seemed to Toots quite as it should be. She honored Blake for it. If she were a famous author, she would live in exactly that same mysterious aloofness; but as, day after day, she lingered outside his wall, and as, day after day, she never saw anything except those carefully trimmed, self-satisfied grounds and that distant, forbidding mansion, the fact that its owner never appeared began to madden her. It was all right to treat the rest of the world in that way, but in her humblest moments Toots had never quite associated herself with the rest of the world.

By slow degrees, during those listless half-hours which she spent in front of his house on those hot, lazy afternoons, it became natural for Toots to imagine scenes in which Blake really should come out of his gate, and in which, of course, she should repay him for that humiliation which, all unconsciously, he was making her suffer. The quality of the humiliation varied according to her mood, perhaps according to the temperature of the day or the amount of dust on her tired feet. In the gentlest of these scenes his humiliation would be rather enjoyable, her own attitude would be little more than a gracious coquetry. He would be strolling around his grounds, in white flannels, when their eyes would meet over the wall. He would smile and she would half smile, but with such a glance as would put him humorously yet firmly in his place.

FROM this well-bred meeting the imagined encounters ranged widely in both directions. On some days Toots imagined him speaking to her boldly, impertinently. A chill, cutting glance would be all that he would receive for his pains. On other days she would imagine him coming on horseback out of the grounds just as she was passing. Near the gate his horse would take fright. At the same moment a baby-carriage would be approaching or, better, a little toddling child of two or three years. Frantically the plunging horse would leap straight for it. There would be a cry, people running from all directions, but, alone among them, Toots herself would be in time. Leaping up (ten feet at least in the picture in her mind) the frail girl in white would catch the bridle of the infuriated animal. The child would be saved, but she herself would be borne to earth under the merciless hoofs. Beside himself, Blake would spring to the ground, and now, in the person of a third party, she could see him leaning over her unconscious form, wringing his hands and crying, "What have I done? What have I done?"

On this particular day Toots was more in the coquettish mood. A nurse and baby passing inopportunely would have had to look out for themselves. A young man in white flannels strolling about the grounds would have been the one in real danger, but neither man, woman nor child came within her vision, unless one counted the gardener, and Toots, with a shamed resolution, quickened her steps and turned down Winyah Avenue. As usually happens, her dreamed-of adventure was to begin at the time and place at which she least expected it. As she went up the stairs to her room, her landlady came out and called her. She held a book in her hand.

"Here's one of the books that Mr. Blake writes," she offered. "You were speaking about it, but please be careful of it. It belongs to the lady next door."

TOOTS went to work the following morning armed with two big ideas. Because of an overcast sky she found that no pictures were to be taken that day. The other players had already gone, while Fred was using his time in building a set. An old-time property-man like him had no need of carpenters. Toots watched him a moment and saw that Fred's scene, like his scenarios, was taking familiar lines.

"Fred," she suggested at last, "how long are we going to do this same old bunk? Why can't we get something new?"

True carpenter that he was, Fred hammered a nail, then stood off and eyed it before he answered.

"It's funny, your speaking of that," he replied, his eye still on the nail. "Browning was saying the same thing last night."

Browning was the god of Fred Frayer's machine. A manufacturer of lenses, he had at first supplied Fred's working equipment and credit for supplies, but seeing early just where Frayer's talents ended, he had gradually been forced to become banker for the concern as well as a sort of voluntary conservator.

"Well," demanded Toots, "what are you going to do about it?"

Fred drove another nail and again stood off and surveyed it.

"Toots," he answered, as if abstracted, "you don't see and Browning doesn't see that there are only a few things that the moving pictures can do. Me, being an old-timer, I do see it. It isn't like the regular stage. It's limited. I wish I could make Browning understand that. The trouble with him is that he doesn't know enough to let well enough alone. There'll always be a certain demand for a certain kind of picture. At least I hope there will. If there isn't, you and I will have to give up this graft and go back to work, but the moving picture can never compete with the spoken voice. Put the best moving picture that was ever made, or ever will be made, up beside the worst Uncle Tom show that ever packed its trunks, and which will the crowds go to see? You know just as well as I do. Look at the phonograph. When they first came out, you could pack a hall with them; but who would pay ten cents to hear a phonograph concert now? What made you think of this?"

"Oh, nothing," answered Toots; but Fred was at least a shrewd judge of show people. He turned and looked at her suspiciously. Toots blushed.

"It was this," she confessed, holding out her book. "Be careful of it, because it belongs to the lady next door to where I live."

The book, however, was in no immediate danger from Fred Frayer's dusty hands. He made no move to take it.

"What is it?" he asked without interest, going back to his carpentry.

"It's a story," replied Toots. "It's awfully exciting."

"What good's that going to do us? Stories are the least of our troubles. One man could shut his eyes and make up all the stories all the cameras in the country could ever take faster than they could use them."

"But not this kind of story," insisted Toots. "This is a real story."

"That's just the trouble," retorted Fred. He faced her suddenly, took the book from her hand, and held it open before her eyes. The page was almost unbroken dialogue. "Look at that!" he exclaimed, pointing to a line. "And that! And that! And that! If you can invent some kind of a machine that will make a figure on a white sheet talk at just the proper eighth of a second, then we can begin to think about this sort of thing." Contemptuously he turned the leaves to find a page which would make the idea seem still more preposterous, but he came to a picture and stopped. His expression changed. "Was that what you meant?" he asked quietly.

Toots smiled. "Yes."

I have said that all this occurred nearly twenty years ago, that David Blake was a novelist, and that David Blake was exceedingly prosperous. He wrote historical novels. The picture at which Frayer was staring showed a group of ladies and gallants in the costumes of the time of Louis XIV.

"BY GEORGE, Toots!" exclaimed Frayer, staring in awe, "I believe that you have started something. Those white wigs were just made for this business." He paused. "We'll have to get somebody more subtle than Billy Mercer, though. Can you leave this thing with me for an hour?"

Toots nodded and went on into the house to find Susie. Fred sat down on a sawhorse and opened the book. A new age had begun. The late medieval had passed into the early modern. The first scenario was about to be borrowed.

An hour later Toots looked diplomatically out of the house and saw that Fred had begun his carpentering again. She had still to broach her second great subject, and judged the time to be ripe. As she approached him, she waited excitedly for Fred's enthusiastic approval of her first idea, but like most new employers, Fred felt that he must be deprecatory about innovations suggested by employees.

"Well, what about it?" she demanded at last.

Fred took time to nail a white cross-brace before he replied. The book was lying face down in a pile of sawdust, and was thumb-marked on every page.

"Toots, I'll tell you," he said at last; "the thing can be done, but it will take an

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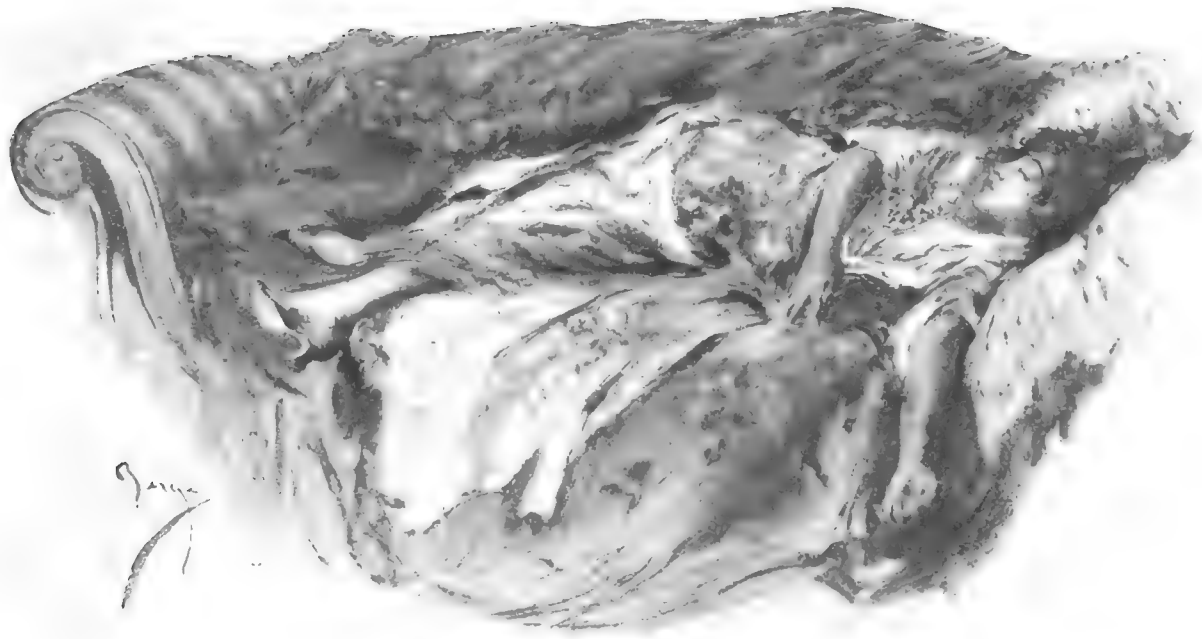

Toots was perfectly well able to play her part. "Where am I?" she asked feebly.

awful lot of doing. What's more, it will take a lot of money. I'll have to ask Browning about it." He turned back to his work as if the subject were ended, but Toots smiled maliciously.

"Fred," she said, "I've got an offer of another job."

Fred's hammer hung in mid-air. He seemed to be thinking it over a moment in silent communion and then he turned. "I thought you said you would never go on the stage," he answered innocently.

"You know what I mean," said Toots, smiling shrewdly.

"I don't know what you mean at all," replied Fred, his eyes opening in protest.

Toots saw that he really did not. "I've got another offer to work in moving-pictures. It's that French concern. They're going to start an American branch near Philadelphia—forty dollars a week, fifty-two weeks a year, rain, hail, or sunshine."

Fred's jaw dropped. He looked at her in amazement. "Are you kidding me, Toots?" he asked, almost pathetically. His shock was so genuine that Toots's voice lost all its banter.

"No, Fred, I really mean it. A man came to see me last night."

Fred sat on the saw-horse and the hammer hung limply between his knees. "Well, what are you going to do?" he asked weakly.

"What are *you* going to do?" retorted Toots.

"I'll tell you, Toots," he answered slowly. "Of course this proposition is entirely a gamble with me. If it was all my money, it would be a different matter; but Browning is a business man. I don't like to have to say it, but when I took you on you'd never had any stage experience and I was taking a chance——"

If Toots had not just come from a talk with the artless Susie, she might have been genuinely moved by this appeal, but Susie had just confided gleefully that one more year like the last, and they would own the plant clear. Thus she broke into his evasions with a laugh.

"Fred," she said, "you're just like all the rest of them. Time and again I've heard you say on the road that a manager would screw out an actor's eye-teeth if he got the chance, and now you're crying poor just as they used to do."

Fred smiled—a little. "That's straight, Toots," he pleaded, "about its being Browning that has the last say. I'll ask him. What do you want?"

"No more than I can get elsewhere," she answered.

"Forty a week?" asked Fred feebly.

"The year round," insisted Toots mercilessly.

"Well, I'll ask him," promised Fred, shaking his head, and in a voice that held out little hope, but Toots was not deceived. She skipped out of the yard lightheartedly and when she walked briskly past the big place with the low stone wall she looked at it with neither resentment nor hostility. She looked at it estimatingly. She tossed at its unseen owner a cordial smile—the greeting of one successful artist to another.

IT WAS in a vaudeville theatre in Jacksonville, Florida, the following April that David Blake learned that a new era had dawned. Having watched, in bored amusement, a song-and-dance act and a troupe of twelve tumbling Arabs, the darkening of the house for the moving-pictures had been a signal for him to leave as a matter of course. At the back of the house, however, he had turned, and what he had seen had caused him to stop with a jerk at the head of the aisle. A moment later he had slipped into an empty seat, and an hour later he was writing a scorching letter to his publishers in New York. The more he thought over his letter the madder he got, and the next morning, instead of going south for another week at Daytona, he took the train for the North, thus beating his letter into his publisher's office by just an hour.

Four days later, on a balmy spring afternoon, Browning stamped into the New Rochelle yard and found Fred Frayer, dreaming out other scenarios, seated on a saw-horse as usual, hammer in hand.

"You're a hell of a man!" was the banker's greeting. He held out a letter. "Take a look at that. We're up against a series of injunctions that tie up that 'Lady Margaret' picture in every theatre in the country. Furthermore, we've got the pleasant choice of paying five thousand dollars or standing a whopping big damage suit. That means nothing to you, I suppose. It isn't your money."

Fred Frayer turned white.

"What's the matter?" he gasped, but Browning roared on:

"I suppose you never heard of such a thing as a copyright."

"I've heard of it," replied Fred limply.

"Oh, you have, have you?" retorted Browning. "I wouldn't have guessed it. In the meantime, this plant closes flat until we know where we stand. I've half a mind to put an attachment on you myself. How many other pictures have you been stealing?"

The word cut Fred like a whip. He simply sat there and stared while Browning grew wilder and wilder. The torrent of rage finally ran itself out. Browning left the grounds, and the unhappy Fred went into the house to break the news to the equally bewildered Susie.

Even then, as they talked it over, white-faced, watching the foundations of their new-found wealth crumbling under their feet, the poor old couple could not understand just what they had done.

"Do you suppose he means it?" asked Susie in trembling tones.

"If you'd heard him talk, you'd have thought so," replied her husband.

"I did hear him, even in here, but I thought that he was just raving at these new French people." She paused. "I hate to tell Toots. She's so proud of her forty a week, and she's signed a lease on that little house for a year."

"I told her she hadn't ought to have done it," said Fred. "She'd ought to have known it was too good to last. It isn't the book people so much as the show people.

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Brazos and Dumont own the dramatic rights. Why didn't somebody tell me that? They're the ones that are causing the fuss."

"Brazos and Dumont?" echoed his wife in mingled terror and righteous anger. "If that isn't the big managers all over! Can't they even let us alone after we're out of the show business?"

Fred knew what was coming, and to avoid a useless diatribe on the fiendishness of the big theatrical mangers he moved back into the yard. The little stage which he had used for indoor scenes was much as when he had built it, with his own hands, a year before, and the familiar sight of it now only increased his anguish. He took his accustomed seat on the saw-horse and tried to think—a study in abject misery.

In defense of poor Fred as he sat there it must be urged that if he had had any real intention of stealing David Blake's story he would have done it far more cleverly than he actually had done. The name, to be sure, was not the same, but the names of the principal characters were, while artless Fred had lifted whole scenes from the book.

To him authorship was as distant and as unreal a thing as it had been to Toots. Like her, it was hard for him to realize that any author was actually alive. That any one would object to such a harmless thing as a few pictures had never occurred to him. If Brazos and Dumont the mighty, however, were on the war-path against him, he knew that he might as well throw up the sponge and go out of business.

Sitting there on his saw-horse, Toots found him when she came in. As quietly, as gently as he could, he told her, and, as he had done, she sat down suddenly, terrified.

"But my house?" she gasped. It was her first thought. "It's signed for a year at forty a month. What am I going to do?"

"I'm sorry," said Fred, almost choking, but, from the depths of his own unrelieved misery, he could not help adding, "I don't see why you should worry. You can still go to work for the French concern."

"Can I?" retorted Toots bitterly. "Are there chances like that every day in this business? And besides, what good would that do me in Philadelphia, and me paying rent here?"

SHE looked defiantly for her answer, but suddenly saw two great tears start down the deep lines of Fred's tragic old-actor's face, and she burst out in compassion:

"Oh, Fred! It doesn't matter about me. But your—" She did not add, "your one success after twenty years of hopeless failure," but she might just as well have done it. Both of them knew it to be the truth.

Because they both knew it, and felt too deeply to talk about it, Toots walked out of the grounds and slowly up the avenue, her feet dragging more heavily than they ever had done the summer before.

Indeed, indeed, was little Toots Fleming the Mother Eve of the film stars. The very month after she had been given her forty dollars a week she had rented a little cottage, and had herself photographed on the veranda, and all over the lawn. Now, just as Fred almost hated the sight of his little stage, so did Toots find the thought of her new little house gall and wormwood. She dreaded seeing it looming before her, as it did, as a mountain of debt. Several times she choked down her anguish, but when she came to the wall around the big place at the end of the avenue a burst of rage and bitterness overcame her in all her moments of misery.

Her uncontrollable grief burst forth at last. She put her head on her arm against the unfeeling wall and her sobs came in a torrent. The stone merely scratched her face, unresponsive, repellent. She tried to control herself, to draw away, when she heard a voice almost in her ear: "My dear young lady, what in the world is the matter?"

For a moment the sound of a voice only made her sob louder, then with swimming eyes she looked up. On the other side of the wall stood a sunburnt young man in white flannels!

"My dear young lady, what in the world is the matter?" David Blake kept on repeating, and Toots could only burst out in a choking hysteria:

"Forty dollars a month!"

But Fate, the mistress of drama herself, could not let that moment go by, despite the incompetent actor. Toots did not have the exquisite joy of seeing it herself, not even in the person of a spectator, for suddenly, before her eyes, everything went a dull green. The next minute David Blake, with one hand on the wall, vaulted lightly across it, and bent in alarm above her crumpled, unconscious body.

THIS was twenty years ago. I find myself constantly obliged to repeat it. All its features seem now so unbelievable. When Toots opened her eyes, a gentle, dignified, old-time Irish maid-servant, with a neat black dress and graying hair, was standing in the room. She hurried forward. "Lie quiet, dearie, you're perfectly safe," she said, but Toots did not need her reassurance. Weak as she was, this scene was delightfully as she had supposed it would be, and at last Toots was perfectly well able to play her part.

"Where am I?" she asked feebly.

Twenty years ago? Bless us! It must have been ninety, for the maid did not even smile. To-day a baby would have grinned in its cradle at that question.

"You're in Mr. Blake's house," the maid replied. "The doctor said it was only nerves and spring weather."

As a matter of fact, the doctor had said more than that. He had said that it was lack of nourishment. He had not known how Toots had camped on crackers and jam in the ecstasy of her unskilled housekeeping, but he had recognized the results. He had also said that there had been some great emotional strain. If Toots had heard that, she might have been satisfied, but nerves and spring weather were not dramatic enough. She shut her eyes with a wan, sad look and the maid, in alarm, sped out of the room. Toots opened her eyes cautiously as she heard her go, but hearing footsteps, closed them promptly once more. The doctor had gone, and David Blake came into the room at the summons of the frightened maid.

Toots was lying there white and still. Blake stood over her, looking down at her apparently unconscious form. Gently he picked up one hand which dropped at her side. Instinctively Toots drew it angrily aside. That had not been on the program—at least not for a long time yet. A moment later, however, just as she had planned it, she opened her eyes in startled, deer-like inquiry. If she had opened them a fifth of a second sooner she might have seen a suspicion of a twinkle in Blake's own eyes. As it was, she saw nothing but chivalric sympathy.

A moment longer she lay there, then she decided on her course of action. It might have been called Drama Number Two. With sudden self-possession she sat erect.

"I must go," she said in a quiet, modulated voice.

DAVID BLAKE turned suddenly away, his shoulders shaking. To herself she was a calm, self-possessed, queenly woman, acting with chilling dignity. To him she was a very pathetic and very mussed little girl wholly oblivious to the fact that she still had a huge wet bath-towel wrapped around her head.

Blake turned toward her once more and Toots rose to her feet, but suddenly decided that she had better sit down. Her knees had not worked as they should have. With her sudden motion she felt something warm trickling down her neck and she put up her hands in a fright.

"Ooh!" she exclaimed. "Is it blood?"

Blake laughed. "No, it's just water. Here, let me do it for you."

Gently he unwrapped the huge turban of a towel and with the dry end carefully dabbed the drops from her forehead and neck while Toots sat submissive.

"We have sent for your friends," he said. "My servants seemed very much impressed when they learned how important a person we had here. They recognized you in a minute."

But Toots only half heard him. She wondered whether she had better tell him that she was beginning to feel very sick. Things oddly seemed to be slipping backward, not forward. Again she began to feel herself getting all mixed up in that scene of a plunging horse and a man in white flannels, but somehow she dreaded it this time. She forced herself to ask a question. She heard her own voice, very distinct, saying mechanically:

"Tell me what happened."

"You fainted," Blake said. He looked at her thoughtfully. "Before that you were very much upset about something. Had anything happened?"

At that the whole force of her misery came plunging back over her like a great green wave, but this time she knew that she must not show it. She started to rise and then she gave up. She felt herself thrown back violently, and then, as one clear object jutting out of a mist, she saw Blake's face very near and suddenly very anxious. He had a big cameo pin in his necktie and somehow that struck her as odd—that Blake—should have—a white—cameo, cameo, cameo—

A door slammed with a jar. She wondered how he had got clear across the room, for out of the darkness she heard his voice saying with unnatural loudness, "Annie, come quickly, Annie!"

This time when Toots came back to full consciousness it was not with a start. It was gradually, and everything seemed perfectly familiar and friendly. She looked up at the great bed in which she was lying, and then at Susie sewing beside the window. Somehow it was the fact that Susie

(Continued on page 128)

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Mary Wollaston

By Henry Kitchell Webster

Author of "The Real Adventure," "The White Arc," etc.

CHAPTER EIGHT
The Dumb Princess

NONE of his own family knew quite what to make of Anthony March. All of them but his mother disapproved of him, though on more or less mutually contradictory grounds. Disapproved of him more than they did of each other, though he occupied a sort of middle ground between them. It is a possible explanation to the paradox that each of them regarded him as a potential ally and so spent more time trying to change his ways, scolding at him, pointing out his derelictions and lost opportunities, than it was worth while spending on the others, who were hopeless.

I shall be a little more intelligible, perhaps, if I tell you briefly who they were. The father, David March, and Eveline, his wife, were New Englanders. They both came, as a matter of fact, from within ten miles of Glastonbury, Connecticut, though they didn't discover this fact until after they'd met a number of times in the social and religious activities of the Moody Institute. The lives of both had been woven in the somber colors of evangelical religion. With him this ran close to fanaticism and served as an outlet for a very intense emotional life. She was not highly energized enough to go to extremes in anything, but she acquiesced in all his beliefs and practises, made him, in short, a perfectly dutiful wife according to the Miltonian precept, "He for God only, she for God in him."

Back in New England she probably would not have married him, for she was a cut or more above him socially, the played-out end of a very fine line, as her beautiful speech would have made evident to any sensitive ear. But out here in Chicago, the disheveled, terrifying Chicago of the roaring eighties, to all intents and purposes alone, clinging precariously to the school-teacher's job which she had no special equipment for, she put up only the weakest resistance to David March's determination that she should be his wife.

He was a skilled artisan then, a stringer and chipper in a piano factory (chipping, if you care to be told, is the tuning a piano gets before its action is put in). One would hardly have predicted then, considering the man's energy and intelligence, that he would remain just that—go on working at the same bench for thirty-five years. But, as I have said, his energy found its main outlet in emotional religion. Their first child, born in eighteen hundred and eighty-six, was a girl whom they named Sarah. Anthony came two years later, and for twelve years there were no more. Then came the late baby, whom they appropriately named Benjamin and allowed a somewhat milder bringing-up than the iron rule the elder ones were subjected to.

It was the dearest wish of David's life to make a preacher of Anthony, and he must have got by way of answers to his prayers, signs which reconciled him to the sheer impossibility of his project. The boy's passion for music manifested itself very early, and with this David compromised by training him for the higher reaches of his own craft. He got employment for Anthony in the piano factory for a year or two after his graduation from high school, and then sent him on for a liberal two years to school in Boston where the best possible instruction in piano tuning was to be had.

SO IT came about that the girl, Sarah, was the first of the children to revolt. She was half way through high school when her brother Benjamin was born, and for two years after she graduated her mother's ill health, a severe breakdown, kept her at home. Then she defied her father and took a job in a downtown office. What he objected to, of course, was not her going to work, but the use she made of the independence which self-support provided her with. The quarrel never came to a real break, though it often looked like doing so, and except for the brief period of her marriage Sarah always lived at home.

When Anthony came back from Boston, he revolted too. He had not been a prodigal; indeed, during his second year in the East, he had in one way or another earned his own living, and he had learned even beyond his father's hopes to tune pianos. But he managed to do it, as it were, with his left hand. What his heart went into during those two years was the study of musical theory and composition and, thanks to a special aptitude which rose to the pitch of genius, he managed to make the comparatively meager training he could get in so short a time suffice to give him the technical equipment he needed.

He came home armed, too, with a discovery—the discovery that a man not enslaved by a possessive sense, a man whose self-respect is not dependent upon the number of things he owns, a man able therefore to thumb his nose at all the maxims of success, occupies really a very strong position.

He didn't like the factory, though he gave it what he considered a fair trial. He didn't like the way they tuned pianos in a factory. The dead level of mechanical perfection which they insisted upon, easily enough attained—too easily—was a stupid affront to his ear. And of course the strict regimentation of life at home as well as in the factory, the, once more, dead level of the plateau upon which life was supposed to be lived, even the security of it, the comparative certainty as to what every day was going to bring forth, was distasteful to one with a streak of the nomad and the adventurer in him.

Thanks to his discovery, he was able to construct an alternative to a life like that. A skilful piano-tuner could earn what money he needed anywhere, and could earn enough in a diligent week to set him free, his simple wants provided for, for the rest of the month—free to listen to music, to compose it when the mood was upon him, to read, to speculate, to survey the pageant of life disinterestedly from the curbstone.

Even a wanderer needs a base, a point of departure for his wanderings, and his father's house could not be made to serve this purpose, so Anthony domiciled himself, after a long quest, in the half-story above a little grocery just off North La Salle Street, and not far from the river. Some difficulty about the title to the bit of land it stood on had prevented its being included in the premises of the new factory which all but surrounded it and it was too small to be worth buying by itself, so the little wooden building had every prospect of standing there until it fell to pieces.

IT HAPPENED, when Anthony had been living there a year or more, that the grocer, with whom he was on the friendliest of terms, got, temporarily, into straits at precisely the time that Anthony had three hundred dollars that he did not know what to do with. He had won a prize of that amount offered by a society for the encouragement of literature for the minor orchestral instruments with a concerto for the French horn. The grocer offered his note for it, but Anthony thought of something better. He bought his room. It was to be his to live in, rent free, for as long as

SYNOPSIS

THE story opens with an introduction to Dr. John Wollaston, his young, beautiful, and gifted second wife, Paula, who was an opera-singer before her marriage, and his sister Lucile, who acts as his housekeeper. Lucile has engaged a discharged soldier, Anthony March by name, to tune the piano. Paula discovers him in the drawing-room, and finds him not only an unusual piano-tuner, but a composer of great promise. She encourages him to send her some of his songs. Her interest in March is not shared by her husband, who, in spite of her devotion to him, is at times overcome by a jealousy which he himself knows to be unreasonable.

Doctor Wollaston's daughter, Mary, a bewildering contradiction of a girl, has drifted away from her father since his marriage, and has been living in New York doing war work. Her brother Rush, when he arrives from overseas, is much impressed by her state of nervous tension, which he attributes to overwork, and he takes her home to Chicago with him.

The night Mary and Rush return, Doctor Wollaston gives a dinner in their honor, although it is the night that Paula has appointed to go over March's songs with him. He refuses to allow Paula to put March off, and she in her turn objects to his effort to combine serious musical work with a social gathering. She sings the songs, however, and Mary is greatly affected by them. She escapes from the guests into a darkened room next the studio, and there encounters March. They are both greatly moved, and while the music lasts are drawn together in a remarkable mood of breathless understanding. Later that night Rush finds her awake. She is strangely unlike herself. He is worried, and remains to talk to her. He tells of his father's reluctant consent to Paula's singing in opera at Lake Forest the following summer, gives her a message from his friend, Graham Stannard, and also tells of the farm that the two young men are about to buy.

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time endured. March surmised that the instrument in which this transaction was recorded would have small standing in court, but he was not the man to worry about a thing like that.

He took a childlike pleasure in this lair of his. It accumulated his miscellaneous treasures like a small boy's pocket. He made a mystery of it. He never gave it as his address. Not even his family knew where it was, nor more than vaguely of its existence.

The address he gave Paula was the one he gave every one else, his father's house, on the northwest side, just off Fullerton Avenue.

That room, in a sense seldom attained in this world, was his own. When he came back from France, the day Lucile found him sitting on the bench in the park, he found it exactly—save for a heavy coating of dust—as he had left it in 1917, when he went down to Camp Grant.

A good philosophy, as John Wollaston with a touch of envy had admitted—if you can make it work.

Where it breaks down with most young men who set out so valiantly with it is the point where one sees the only girl in the world and recognizes the imperious necessity of winning her, of holding out lures for her, of surrounding her, once won, with the setting her superlative worth demands. That this did not happen to Anthony March was due to the fact that the young woman he not so much saw as gradually perceived, was his sister Sarah's friend, Jennie MacArthur.

It was not until after Anthony's return from Boston that this friendship between the two girls was struck up. They worked at that time in the same office and Jennie was a year or so the elder, a clear three years then, older than Anthony.

The difference betwen twenty-two and twenty-five has its importance when the seniority belongs to the woman. Besides which there was a competent experienced air about Jennie that made her seem even older.

Independence had been forced upon her so early that she never was called upon to decide whether she liked it or not. She had an inquiring mind—perhaps experimental would be the better word for it—abundant self-confidence and a good stiff backbone. It was easy to make the mistake of thinking her hard. She was not a pretty woman, with her sandy hair and rather striking freckles, but she was well built, she dressed always with that crisp cleanliness which is the extravagant standard of young women who work in good offices, and her voice had an attractive *timbre*.

TO SARAH MARCH, who, having fought for independence, was a little at a loss what to do with it, her experience and her rather interesting range of friends were a godsend. It was at one of Jennie's parties in the tiny pair of rooms where she lived alone that Sarah met Walter Davis, a mechanical draftsman by day and an ardent Socialist by night, whom she afterward married.

On the other hand, the home which Sarah was sometimes rather dubious about the advantage of possessing was to Jennie a delightful place to be a familiar visitor in. She liked old David, who was a surprisingly charming person when he had no authority over you, she liked Mrs. March, she adored little Ben—young Ben he was now rapidly growing to be—and finally she began taking an interest, which eventually outweighed all the rest, in the family black-sheep, Anthony.

The intimacy between them which began around the time of Sarah's marriage continued intermittently for nearly four years.

When the attraction faded, as it had definitely begun to do some months before he went to Camp Grant, it left their friendship unimpaired, enriched on the contrary. He could talk to her more easily, confide his thoughts to her more freely than to any one else he knew.

THAT ability to be confided in and depended upon was, when one stops to think, one of her special talents. She had emerged, years before, from the crowded stenographer's room in a big engineering concern into the private office of the chief. He was an erratic genius, brilliant, irritable, exacting, tireless, all but impossible to maintain any consistent relation with but one of bitter enmity. He had about made up his mind that a fresh stenographer every morning was all he could hope for, when Jennie became his Scheherazade.

By the time the war broke out she was as indispensable to him as his hands. He had made her an officer of the company and paid her a salary of six thousand dollars a year, but she went on remembering his engagements, writing his letters and soothing the outraged feelings of his clients just as she had done in humbler days. She was, in the good, old-fashioned sense, his better half. Her amusement was the stock market and she played it cannily and with considerable success, with his rather diabolic encouragement.

She was in New York with him when March got home, and he saw her for the first time since his return out at his father's house on a Sunday morning more than a fortnight after the evening at the Wollastons when Paula had sung his songs.

It was his first appearance anywhere since the afternoon in Novelli's studio when he had shown his opera to LaChaise and Paula. It had been agreed upon among them that, with certain important changes, it would make an admirable vehicle for Paula's return to the operatic stage, and being a small affair from the producer's point of view, involving only one interior set, would be practicable for production during the summer at High Forest in case the project for Paula's singing there went through.

March had agreed to the changes and withdrawn into his stronghold over the grocery store with a determination not to more than come up for air until he had worried the thing into the shape they wanted.

He didn't know it was Sunday—having attributed the peacefulness he found pervading Fullerton Avenue to his own good conscience, a purely subjective phenomenon—until, in the parlor of his father's house the sight of his brother Ben at the piano playing soundless tunes upon the tops of the keys brought it home to him. When he inquired for the rest of the family, he learned that they were up-stairs getting ready for church.

"I hope," he said, with a grin at his younger brother, "that you aren't suffering from that old hebdomadal sore throat of yours."

"No, it's all right," Ben said, declining, though, to be amused. "I've got a gentleman's agreement with Sarah. Every other Sunday. Father's well enough satisfied now if he gets one of us. When they're all gone, I can slip out and buy a Sunday paper—jazz up the piano—have a regular orgy. Every other Sunday! Gee, but it's fierce!"

"It's pathetic," March said. "Poor Father! I don't suppose there's any help for it."

What struck him was the pitiful futility of his father's resistance in trying to impose his ways, his beliefs, his will, upon one so rapidly growing into full independence. The only sanction he had was a tradition daily becoming more fragile. He was in for the bitterness of another disappointment. That was what there was no help for.

Naturally young Ben didn't interpret it that way. "You're a nice one to talk like that," he said resentfully. "You've always done whatever you pleased."

"There's nothing to prevent you from doing the same thing if you look at it that way," Anthony observed. "You've got a job a man could live on, haven't you?"

"Live on? Fifteen dollars a week?"

And it may be admitted that Ben's sense of outrage had some foundation. Years ago he had made up his small young mind that he would never work in the factory and he had settled the question before it ever arose in his father's mind by getting himself a job in one of the piano salesrooms on Wabash Avenue. He wasn't precisely a salesman yet, he might perhaps have been spoken of by an unkind person as an office boy. But it was essential that he look like a salesman and act like a salesman, even in the matter of going to lunch. Some day soon he was going to succeed in completing a sale before some one else came around and took it out of his hands, and he would then be in a position to strike for a regular commission.

IN THE meantime with shoes and socks and shirts and neckties costing what they did, the suggestion that his salary was adequate to provide a bachelor's independence was fantastic and infuriating.

"Yes," he grumbled, "if I wanted to live in a rathole and look like a tramp."

"My rathole isn't so bad to live in," Anthony said, "but I'd be sorry to think I looked like a tramp. Do I, for a fact? I haven't had this suit on since I went into the army, but I thought it looked all right."

"Oh, there's a big rip in the back of the shoulder where the padding is sticking through and your cuffs are frayed and your necktie's got a hole worn plumb through it where the wing of your collar rubs. You don't look like a tramp; of course, you look clean and decent. It would be all right if you had to be like that. Only it's all so darned unnecessary. You could make good money if you'd only live like a regular person. Every day or two somebody telephones to know if you aren't home and if there isn't some way we can get to you, and it's kind of humiliating to have to say there isn't; that we don't know where you are, haven't seen you for a week, things like that. Of course it's none of my business, but *I'm* trying to pull out of this. I'd like to *be* somebody some day and it would be a darn sight easier if you were trying to pull the same way instead of queering us all the time."

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"You don't want to run away with the idea that I'm in love with her," he said. "That isn't it."

"Yes, I know," Anthony said thoughtfully. "But then, there's Sarah, on the other hand, who can't forgive me for not putting on a red necktie and going bolshevik. She'd have me put in my time trying to upset the bourgeois apple-cart altogether."

"Oh, Sarah's crazy, of course," Ben said and then less impatiently, "I don't know as I blame her. Perhaps if I had had her hard luck, I'd be that way myself."

(Indeed, Sarah's grudge against society was easily accounted for. Her husband was one of those Socialists who, when we went into the war, revolted from his party because of its pro-German leanings and came out flatly as a patriot. They wouldn't take him in the army, he was too urgently needed at home, so he took a job in a munitions factory and was killed early in 1918 by the bursting of a fly-wheel. It was a cast-iron wheel which should have been of steel, considering that it had to run at a rim speed of one hundred and thirty feet a second. They knew it was likely to burst, but they couldn't get steel and they had to run, so they took the chance. That was excuse enough, considering the bitter urgency of those months. But their employment against the widow's claim for damages of the purely technical defense that young Davis was a draftsman and not called upon by his duties to be anywhere near the fly-wheel, seemed, considering the enormous profits they were making, an utterly soulless proceeding.

Sarah had been a rather incomplete convert to her husband's theories before, but nothing short of the complete destruction of the capitalist system could satisfy her now.)

Both her brothers now paid this tragedy the tribute of a moment's thoughtful silence; then Ben grinned. "You ought to have heard her go on about the limousine that came and left a note for you the other day. Lady inside, chauffeur in a big fur coat. He came up to the door and asked whether you were home, and left the note when Sarah said you weren't. Last Thursday, I think that was, just before supper. It's over there on the mantel, I guess. Sarah's afraid you're going to turn into a little brother of the rich."

"You tell Sarah," Anthony said off the top of his mind, the rest of it obviously engaged with the note—"you tell Sarah there's nothing capitalistic about this. This is from her Dr. Wollaston's wife. Certainly he earns his living if anybody does."

"Do they want their piano tuned again?" Ben asked.

"They don't mention it. They want to know if I'll come to lunch to-day. I'm going to telephone and see if the invitation has expired."

"Good Lord!" said Ben. "What have

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you got to wear? You can't go looking like that." He meant to go into particulars when his brother came back from the telephone. By that time, he had something of nearer concern to himself to think about. When Anthony came back into the room, he found him staring out the window with an expression of the liveliest dismay.

"Oh, look who's here!" he said. "Can you beat it?"

Anthony looked and saw a little Ford coupé pulling up to the curb in front of the house; looked more closely at the person at the wheel and blinked as if he didn't believe his eyes.

"Jennie MacArthur! I thought she was still in New York. But what's she doing in that car?"

"Oh, she bought it last fall," Ben said. "She's getting rich. But can't you see what it means? She's coming round to see Sarah, and that'll give Sarah an excuse for staying home from church. And that means that I'll have to go!"

"Don't worry about that," Anthony said, catching up his hat. "I'll head her off. Tell mother I'll be around to-night."

He intercepted her at the car door, caught both her hands and pressed them tight, pushed her back into her seat as he did so, climbed in and sat down beside her.

"I'm supposed to be saving Ben from the horrible fate of getting dragged to church when it's really Sarah's Sunday," he said. "If you'll just drive me around the corner, I'll explain."

But she forestalled him with a little laugh when he would have begun. "This is good enough for me. I don't want any explanation."

"It's pretty good," he agreed. "Stop a minute, now we're safely around the corner, and let me have a look at you."

She obeyed him literally, pulling up at the curb again, accorded him the look he wanted and took, meanwhile, one of her own at him. Neither of them, however, seemed to find just the phrase in which to announce the result of this scrutiny. She started on again presently and he relaxed against the cushion. "This is more like being home again than anything that's happened yet," he said. "Are we to have a real visit?"

SHE was free till lunch, she told him, and he, after saying, "Well, that's something," admitted his own engagement. "However, that's the best part of two hours. The thing is not to waste any of it."

Naturally enough they wasted a good deal of it. They talked about the little car they were riding in, how she had learned to drive, why she had bought it; how Mr. Ferris, her boss, had said *he* wouldn't be any good for the day after coming down-town in a tight-jammed elevated train and how, having tried the new method of transportation, she had agreed with him how it was as easy to run as a typewriter.

A few minutes more of that, she thought, and she'd begin telling Ford jokes, so she wrenched around to a new subject and asked him how much he'd seen of France, what he thought of the French; how long he'd been home, and what it seemed like to be in civilian clothes again—topics upon which he enlarged as well as he could. She had driven, meanwhile, north to Diversey Boulevard and had then turned west, around the ring. They were out in the middle of Garfield Park when she said, after a hard, tight silence, "Isn't this perfectly ghastly?"

"It's awful," he agreed. "I don't know what's the matter with us—or whose fault it is. But I certainly didn't mean to get started like this."

"I expect that's it," she told him. "Haven't you been trying to treat me just exactly right? Make me feel perfectly comfortable? Haven't you been—being tactful, with all your might, ever since we started? Because I have."

"Well, then, for heaven's sake," he said, "let's quit. Quit trying so infernally hard, I mean. It's too nice a morning to spoil. You know, if the sun manages to come out, as it's trying to, it will be a very handsome April day."

"I don't think talking about the weather is much improvement," she commented. "Tony, let's give it up, for to-day I mean. We'll try again some time from a fresh start. This is perfectly hopeless."

HE TRIED to pretend that she didn't mean it, but she made it clear, even with a touch of asperity, that she did. "Oh, all right," he growled and reached for the handle to the door.

"Don't be silly," she commanded. "I'm not going to leave you here out in the wilds of Garfield Park. Where do you want to go? Is it too early for your lunch?"

"Mrs. Wollaston told me to come at one," he said. "You're not supposed to be ahead of time for a thing like that, are you? Anyway, I've got to go back to my room first."

She caught up the name. "Sarah told me about your going there. First to tune the piano and then the evening when she sang your songs. Sarah's quite eloquent about it."

"Yes, poor Sarah, I know. Ben was quoting her this morning. You know while she regards me as a protégé and parasite of the rich, that young brother of mine walks into me for queering the family by being a tramp. And do you know, Jennie, I have the queerest misgivings that they're both right—though I don't quite see how that can be. Anyhow, I can see how it looks to each of them. However, that won't make the least difference with what I'm going to do."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Why, I suppose," he said, "that I'm going to do what people speak of as settling down. What they mean by that is taking an interest in consequences—more of an interest in what things lead to than in what they are. Well, that's what I'm at now."

"That's a change, all right, for you," she said.

He agreed with her. "I knew when it happened," he added. "It happened when I heard Paula Carresford sing one of my songs. Do you remember the story that used to be in the school-reader about the tiger that tasted blood and ate up the princess? You know, Jennie, it's practically true that up to that night I'd never heard any of my music at all—except mutilated fragments of it as I played it myself. And I'll tell you it was a staggering experience. The queerest experience I ever had in my life, too. I'll tell you about that some time. But I changed right there, just the way the tiger did. I don't happen to want a fur overcoat nor an automobile nor an apartment on the Drive. I honestly don't want them. They aren't a part of my dreams—never were. But I do want to hear my own music. I want to hear it done for all it's worth. I want to hear orchestras play it and singers as good as Paula Carresford sing it. And in order to do that I've got to look ahead a little. I've got to stop doing exactly as I damn please. I've got to do things because somebody besides myself wants them done."

"Have you got something like that to do to-day—with an eye to the consequences?" she asked.

He looked sharply around at her. She was very intent on her driving just then. "That's a remarkably good guess in a way," he said. "I dread going to that house to lunch. A month ago I'd have refused—or pretended I hadn't got the invitation until too late. And I'd have pretended to myself that it was because I didn't care to play the social game; didn't want to take on obligations of the kind I couldn't meet. But now I've told Mrs. Wollaston I'd come, I know the real reason why I don't want to.

"I said just now I didn't want a fur overcoat nor an automobile, and that's eighty per cent. true. And yet, there's a crawly little snob inside me that's in a panic right now because I haven't got proper clothes to wear and because I'm going to have to sit down in front of a lot of funny-shaped forks that I don't know the special uses of.

"Oh, there's more to it than that, of course. It's rather a cross-grained situation. Wollaston doesn't like me. He thinks I'm responsible for his wife having kicked over the traces and signed up to sing at High Forest this summer. In a way, I suppose I am. She's planning to use that opera of mine, you remember—the 'Outcry' we called it—for a novelty, provided they like the way I've padded up her part. The big rôle in it is really for the baritone, of course. That's what I've been slaving over for the last two weeks. If she makes a hit with it, she'll take it to the Metropolitan next winter. Of course, there's no reason in God's world why she shouldn't do that if she can get away with it. She hasn't any children to look after; she told me she didn't even keep house for her husband. All the same, he regards me as a sort of potential homewrecker."

"You can't quite blame him for that, can you?" Jennie suggested. "If you began reading a story about a beautiful young opera-singer who left her husband to go back on the stage again, and sing an opera by a musical genius she'd discovered, wouldn't you expect them to fall in love with each other?"

"THAT shows what nonsense stories are," he said. "That couldn't happen to us in a thousand years. She's beautiful, and kindly and affectionate. She's got temperament enough to blow the cork out of any bottle you tried to hold it down in. But I couldn't fall in love with her if I tried. It doesn't happen on that basis. Besides which, it's my belief that she's altogether in love with her husband. All the same, she's taken me up. She means to push me for all she's worth and let her husband like it or lump it as he pleases. She's got some plans, I don't know just what, for showing me off to one or two of the "right" people to-day. Can't you see what it will be like?"

"I should think it would be rather good fun—that sort of game," she commented.

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She whipped round upon him in a sudden tempest. "It's got to go," she said. "It's got to be made to go."

"That's where the forks come in," he said. "And not having a proper coat. That sort of social skill is the suit of armor those people wear. I've got to go back to my room and sew up that rip Ben told me about and trim my cuffs and try to tie my necktie so that the worn-out spots won't show—and make them do."

It was but a few minutes later—they had been silent ones—that she stopped her car in front of the little grocery store where the rickety outside stair led up to his door.

"I'll come in with you and sew up the rip in your coat," she said.

She wouldn't have made that offer, indeed would hardly have driven him up to his own door, if she had not been a young woman with steady nerves and a level head, and an abundant confidence in both. Because that dingy little wooden building, with its outside stair to his attic, was the focus of memories that had by no means lost their poignancy. It was not, after all, so many years ago that she had mounted that stair for the first time, and it couldn't be considered strange that her heart quickened a little as she climbed it now.

The room startled her by being so utterly unchanged, not only the major articles in it, the stove, the iron bed, the deal table he wrote at, the carpenter's bench, the half-invented musical typewriter that he had once attempted to convert an old square piano into, the hollow-backed easy chair, but the quite minor and casual trifles as well. On one of the sets of home-made shelves that served for his music and his books was a sort of still-life composed of a meerschaum pipe with a broken stem and an empty goblet of pressed glass, standing upon a yellow-paper-covered copy of Anatole France's "Thaïs," that had been just like that the last time she was here. She had stuck a bunch of sweet-peas she was wearing into that goblet. It made an uncannily short bridge to the past, a trivial reminder like that.

Evidently he felt it too. Perhaps he had followed her glance toward that dusty shelf corner. Because, a moment after he shut the door behind them, opened a window and taken a look at the fire, he came hesitantly and a little awkwardly up to her and took her by the shoulders as if to draw her into an embrace. He was very gentle about it.

Also he was ludicrously tentative. If she'd wanted to let herself go, she could have laughed rather hysterically about that. She disengaged herself from his hands, decisively, indeed, yet without any air of pique.

"Oh, no, my dear," she said. "Take off your coat and let me get to work. Where's your sewing-kit?"

He produced it instantly (the room was not in real disorder—it only looked like that to any one who did not understand its system), gave her his coat, wandered restlessly about for a few minutes and presently came to rest at the deal table where he had spent the greater part of the last fortnight, turning over, discontentedly, the sheets of score paper he had left there.

Over her sewing she let her mind run free, forgetting this present Sunday with its problems, mixing a pleasant amalgam of the past. She wasn't heartbroken, you know, hardly regretful. She had life about as she wanted it. She never had been in love with March in the accepted meaning of the phrase—she had never even thought she was—and it is altogether probable that if she had found him eager to resume the old relation, she would have felt a certain reluctance about taking it up again. Life changed with the years and some of its old urgencies quieted down—for the time anyhow. Still the night when she had worn those sweet-peas remained a fragrant memory. She was recalled to the present by a violent gesture he made over the score on his work-table.

"This damned thing is rotten," he said with angry conviction. "I know it—I knew it while I wrote it. It may be what they want, but it's rotten. Straight into the stove is where it ought to go."

"Is that what you're writing for Mrs. Wollaston?" she asked.

He nodded. "I was trying to make up my mind whether to take what I've got done along to day or not. If she's the musician I think she is, she'll tell me to take it out to the ash-can."

"Well, that will be better than putting it in the stove yourself," she observed, going back with an air of placidity to her sewing, "because then you'll know it's bad and if you burn it now, you won't. You haven't even heard it."

"I heard it before I wrote it," he argued. "I hear it again when I read it. That's a silly argument. Of course, I know it."

"You said a little while ago that you'd never heard any of your music until Mrs.

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Wollaston sang those songs. They sounded better than you thought they would."

"That's different," he protested. "I knew they were good, damned good. Only I didn't quite realize how good they were. I suppose I won't realize until I hear her sing this how rotten it is. But I don't need to. I know well enough right now."

He went on turning the pages back and forth with gloomy violence, reading a passage here and another there and failing to get the faintest ray of comfort out of any of it, even out of the old soiled quires which belonged, obviously, to the original score.

"Is it all bad?" she asked. "Or just the new part?"

"The whole thing," he grunted.

"That's that Belgian thing, isn't it?"

"That's the one," he assented.

"Well," she pointed out to him, "you thought that was good once. You knew it was good. I never heard the music, of course, and wouldn't have known anything about it if I had, but I remember how you felt about it. You said when you'd finished it that you knew that it was first-class—real stuff. Well, if it all looks alike to you this morning, perhaps what you've just been writing is as good as that, and it's just your mood to-day that makes it look rotten."

He closed the score and slapped his hand down upon it with a gesture of dismissal. The he rose and leaned against the edge of the table. "That's good logic, my dear," he conceded, "but it doesn't cover the ground. The old stuff was good in a way. I really meant it and felt it and managed to get it down on paper. And the new stuff is like it, in that it's a damned clever imitation of it. I had to do it that way because I couldn't get back into the old mood. I'm sick of atrocities and horrors—everything that's got the name of war in it, even though I was never under shell fire myself or in an air raid. Well, writing the imitation has made me hate the thing I was trying to imitate. I stuck at it for the reason I told you this morning. Because I saw that to get anywhere, to get a chance to do the things I want to do, I'll have to do things that other people want. But good God, when it results in stuff like this—Jennie, what shall I do about it? Shall I take this thing now and chuck it into the stove and then tell LaChaise and Mrs. Wollaston to go to the devil? Or shall I tuck it under my arm like a good little boy and see if I can get away with it?"

She looked at him thoughtfully. "What is the new thing you want to write?" she asked.

HE smiled. "You're a wonder, Jennie," he said. "There is a new thing. I'm simply swamped in it. It won't let me alone. It's been driving me pretty nearly crazy. That's why it's been such perfect hell sticking to this other thing. Jennie, it's another opera. A big one, full size. A romantic fairy opera. I haven't got it in order yet. It isn't fit to talk about. But it's about a princess, a little blue-eyed, pale-haired princess, who is under a spell. She's dumb. She's dumb except in the presence of her true lover. Do you see? They are trying to cure her and they can't. But mysteriously in the night they hear her singing. Her lover is with her, you see, and they try to solve the mystery. Maybe they kill him, I don't know. Or maybe they make him faithless to her. I don't know whether there is a fairy-story like that or whether I just made it up. And I haven't worked it out at all. I haven't any words for it, no book, nor anything. But I tell you it comes in waves, whole scenes from it. I'd like a hundred hands to write it down with. I'd like to take one header into it and never come up. And meanwhile I've been slugging away at that other damned thing because Mrs. Wollaston and LaChaise want it—because it's the main chance."

She asked at the end of the rather long silence why he didn't tell them about the new idea and get them to adopt it instead, but he greeted this suggestion with an impatient laugh.

"It would be absolutely impossible for High Forest in the first place," he said. "The thing would need as big a production as, oh, "Pelleas and Melisande." And then Mrs. Wollaston could never sing it. She isn't the type. It's a different sort of thing altogether from the thing she could do. Oh, no, the thing's hopeless until after I've succeeded with something else. But oh, my God, Jennie, if you could hear it!"

She had finished her repairs on his coat and rising now held it up to him. While he was groping for the sleeves, she asked quietly, "Who is the princess, Tony? The dumb little princess with the blue eyes?"

FOR a second he stood just as he was, like one frozen, then he finished settling into his coat, walked over to his work chair and dropped into it, leaning forward and propping his head with his hands.

"Yes," he said. "In a way, perhaps, there is some one. That's what I was going to tell you about. She came in as a quiet little ghost, just as Paula Carresford was beginning to sing, and she sat down beside me without a word. And somehow while we listened, we—we were the same person. I can't make you understand that. It never happened to me before, nothing in the least like it, nothing so—intimate. I felt that song go vibrating right through her. She didn't speak at all, even after it was over except to say that we mustn't talk—while we were waiting for the people in the other room to go away. And then Mrs. Wollaston got me. She didn't see her at all. She had disappeared somehow by that time."

He stopped, but Jennie, it seemed, had nothing to say just then. She turned away to her outdoor wrap, but she laid it down again and stood still when he went on.

"You don't want to run away with the idea that I'm in love with her," he said. "That isn't it. That's rather particularly—not it. I haven't an idea who she was, nor any intention of trying to find out. Even if I knew the way to begin getting acquainted with her, I'm inclined to think I'd avoid it. But as an abstraction—no, that's not what I mean—as a symbol of what I'll find waiting for me whenever I get down to the core of things—I've got a sort of superstition that if I don't do anything to—to break the spell, you know—that some time she'll come back just the way she came that night."

With a little exaggeration of the significance of the act, she put on the coat she had crossed the room to get. He got up and came over to help her, but he stopped with a sudden clenching of the hands and a wave of color in his face as he saw the look in hers. At that she gave a little laugh, came swiftly to meet him, pulled him up in a tight embrace and kissed him.

"Good luck, my dear," she said. "I must be running on and so must you. I'd take you with me only we go different ways. Carry your score along to the Wollastons'. That's the first step to the princess, I guess."

CHAPTER NINE

In Harness

THE episode upon which March had built his opera was one that was current during the autumn of 1914. I don't remember whether it was in the papers or was one of those stories that enjoyed so enormous a *viva-voce* circulation.

A certain Belgian town had been burned and it had been explained that this was done because the German officer who was billeted upon the burgomaster had been shot. The story was that the burgomaster's son shot him because he had raped his sister. The thing got complete possession of March's mind. At first just the horror of it, and later its dramatic and musical possibilities.

He saw in orchestral terms the sodden revelry in that staid house—with its endless cellars of Burgundy. He saw the tight-drawn terror in the girl's room where she lay in bed. He saw the room lighted fitfully by the play of search-lights over the city; the sinister entrance from a little balcony through the French window of the officer in uniform, his shadow flung ahead of him by the beam of search-light.

He saw the man, blood as well as wine drunk, garrulous and fanatic with the megalomania of the conquering invader. He saw the man's intention made clear from the first, but the execution of it luxuriously postponed—safely postponed, because of the terrified girl's acceptance of his assurance that if anything happened to him, if a hand were raised against him because of his being there, her father and a dozen hostages would be shot and the town burned to the ground.

Then came the girl's irrepressible outcry when he first laid hands upon her; the brother's knock at the door; her frantic efforts to reassure him frustrated by a drunken laugh from the officer; the forcing of the door and the fight half in the dark; the killing of the girl and then of her ravisher.

The thing that wouldn't let March alone, that forced him into the undertaking, was the declaration of the brutal philosophy of the conqueror made by the officer while he gloated over the girl who was to be his prey; the chance to put into musical terms that paranoiac delusion of a world-conquest.

One recognized in it vaguely some of Wagner's themes and some of Strauss's, distorted and grown monstrous.

The thing haunted March, as I have said, and he tried to find somebody who would write him the book, the indispensable preliminary to his getting to work. Failing here, he audaciously made up his mind to write it himself. It was not his first attempt to do, in the mere light of nature, a thing commonly supposed to be impossible except at the end of painful instruction. He had once experimented at painting in oils, he had tried his hand at the stylus, he had made a few figurines in modeling-wax. He wrote his play, then, by the simple process of building first, with painstaking accuracy, a model of his stage, the girl's room in that burgomaster's house

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"This isn't the time for you to come here," Rush went on. "This house isn't the place for you to come."

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with the French windows giving upon the little balcony. He modeled the furniture in plasticine. He bought three little dolls to represent his characters. And then he reported what he saw happening in that room; what his characters did and what they said.

By the time he had finished this work, the music was all in his head. He couldn't write it down fast enough.

It had been one of the great experiences of his life, writing that opera. Jennie's reminder that he had once believed it good was a conservative statement. La Chaise and Paula were deeply impressed by the power, both of its music and its drama, and saw possibilities in it for a sensational success. The drawback, fatal unless it could be overcome, lay in the fact that the dominant rôle in it was that of the baritone. Dramatically the soprano's part was good enough, but there was nowhere near enough for her to sing. There was no reason, though, they both asserted, and sent March away from their conference half convinced, why the girl's part could not be greatly amplified.

There were various expedients; a preliminary scene between the girl and her brother; an apostrophe to an absent lover; a prayer. Also instead of being frozen into terror-stricken silence by her ravisher's monstrous purpose, she could just as well be represented as making a desperate resistance. She could plead with him, denounce him; attempt to take advantage of his drunkenness and trick him. It could be made as good a woman's part as the big act of "Tosca."

March, under the rule of that determination of his to settle down, to develop a just appreciation of secondary consequences, to orientate himself toward the great desideratum of getting his music produced, had assented to all this and gone to work.

Paula did not tell him, as he had gloomily prophesied to Jennie, to take the new first scene he brought her that Sunday out to the ash-can. And, indeed, it sounded so much better when they read it over together that he was for the moment reassured.

But her attitude toward the opera was different from what it had been toward the group of Whitman songs, and this difference grew more marked at their subsequent sessions over it. There had been about the songs a glamour of discovery. One does not hasten to apply the assayer's acid to treasure trove. And, too, it was an altruistic impulse which had prompted her to take up his songs.

THERE aren't many people who can travel steadily or very far on that motivation, and Paula was not one of them. From the moment when she took the plunge, ignored—all but defied—her husband's wishes, and signed the High Forest contract, she ceased to be concerned for anything, broadly speaking, but her own success. March's opera, then, was not to her the expression of his genius, but a potential vehicle for hers. She was acutely critical of it. She knew what she wanted, and it was not thinkable that she should put up with anything less.

She was not aware of this change of attitude. She was blessed with a vigorous non-analytical mind that asked no awkward questions, suggested no paralyzing doubts. The best thing that could possibly happen to March's opera was that it should be made to fit her like a glove; that it should demand precisely all her resources and nothing that was beyond them; obviously, since it was going to be her opera, a thing she was going to wear.

Had she been, as many eminent persons in her profession are, a mere bundle of insensate egotism complicated by a voice, she would have driven March to flat rebellion in a week, all his good resolutions notwithstanding.

What made it tolerable was that she had a good musical intelligence of her own, and a real dramatic sense. He could recognize what she wanted as an intelligible thing, consistent with itself. Only, it was not his thing—not the thing he saw. By reason of its very consistency it was never the thing he saw.

"She wouldn't do it that way," he would protest.

"I would," Paula would tell him. "I wouldn't lie there, whimpering."

He was always arguing with her—wrangling, it almost came to, sometimes—in defense of his own conception. For a sample:

"LOOK at what she is: a burgomaster's daughter. That means prosperous, narrow-minded, middle-class people. She's convent-bred, devout. She's still young or she'd be married. She's altogether without experience. She's frightened just as a child would be over what's going on in the house. And the prayer she says when she goes to bed would just be the nice little prayer a child would say, an Our Father or a Hail Mary, whatever it might be. As simple as possible, on the surface, but with an undertone of overmastering terror. The sort of Promethean defiance you're talking about would be inconceivable to a child like that."

"I suppose it would, to most of them," she admitted, "but this one's going to be different. After all, it's the exceptional ones that usually have operas written about them. I don't believe all the dancers in Alexandria were like *Thaïs*, nor all the gipsy cigar-makers in Seville like *Carmen*. I don't believe many little Japanese girls would feel about Pinkerton the way *Cio Cio San* did. Why can't our *Dolores* be an exception, too?"

The only answer he could make to that was that it spoiled the other figure, reduced him from a sort of cosmic monster to the mere custom-made grand-opera villain.

"What if it does?" she retorted. "This isn't being written for Scotti or Vanni Marcoux. It's being written for me." That was the tonic chord they always came back to. It was Paula's opera.

March presently began to feel, too, that he was growing to be nothing more than Paula's composer. It was important to the success of their enterprise that his reputation should be intensively exploited among the rich and influential who figured as patrons of the High Forest season. She went at the task of building it as ruthlessly as she modeled his opera.

Her demands upon March himself were explicit. In the first place he was to bring her all his music, early as well as late, trivial as well as important, in order that she might select from it what, if anything, might be exploited at once.

She had promised to give a recital just before Easter, in aid of one of the local charities—it was one that boasted an important list of patronesses—and if she could make an exclusive program of his songs she would like to do so.

Then, while it was too late to get any of his orchestral compositions performed by the orchestra this season, it would be a good thing to get Mr. Stock to read something in the hope of his taking it for next year. An announcement, even a mere unofficial intimation, that Anthony March (whose opera . . . and so on) was to be represented on the symphony program next season would help a lot.

What dismayed him most was her insistence—she was clear as a bell about this—that he himself get up the accompaniments to some of the simpler of his songs so that when she took him out to meet people who wanted to hear a sample of his music, they could manage, between them, some sort of compliance.

He nearly got angry, but decided to laugh instead, over her demand that he be waiting back stage, when she gave her recital of his songs (which she did with great success) to come out at the end and make his bow in his now-discarded uniform. It was the only reference she ever made to his shabby appearance.

It was steadily growing shabbier, too, since she left him hardly any time at all for tuning pianos. She would have been utterly horrified had she known what tiny sums he was living on from week to week. It never, for example, occurred to her when she suggested that a certain score of his ought to be copied that he could not afford to take it out to a professional copyist and so sat up nights doing it himself. He did it rather easily, to be sure, since it was one of the numerous things he had earned a living at.

THERE was only one of her many demands that he persistently refused to comply with. And she took this refusal rather hard; acted more hurt than angry about it, to be sure, but came back to it again and again. When she discovered that he made no pretense of living at his father's house, she asked for his real address so that she could always be sure of getting at him when she wanted him. This he would not give her.

If he did, he said, it would only result in his staying away from there and doing his work somewhere else. It was one of his simple necessities to *know* that he couldn't be got at. He would make every possible concession. Would go, or telephone, at punctiliously regular and brief intervals, to his father's house to learn whether she had sent for him, but give up the secrecy of his lair he would not. It wasn't possible.

I think she compensated herself for this refusal by sending for him sometimes when she did not really need him, just to be on the safe side, and, on the same basis, engaged his attendance ahead from day to day. Anyhow she occupied, in one way or another, practically the whole of his time, and the dumb little blue-eyed princess knocked at his door in vain. Only in those hours when sheer fatigue had sent him to bed had she any opportunity of visiting him. Sometimes she made white nights for him by haunting those hours, refusing to go away; sometimes, by

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Why is an old man more appealing to an audience than an old woman?

The Grand Old Men *of the* American Stage

By Alexander Woollcott

Mr. Woollcott is one of the leading New York dramatic critics. There will be an article by him on some interesting theatrical subject every month during the 1920 season. In the April number he will discuss John Drinkwater's sensational Lincoln play, and Frank McGlynn's remarkable interpretation of the martyred President in it.

WHY is it that when a player on the American stage grows nationally famous in a single rôle, the rôle is so often that of an old man? Why is it that when some gentle, white-haired characterization takes hold of the imagination of a generation, it is never under any circumstances that of an old woman?

The question tantalizes you as you watch the grand old men of the American stage shamble by in review in the great theatre of your memory. Look at them: Joe Jefferson in the dear tatters of *Rip Van Winkle;* Denman Thompson, who was ever "hard as a hickory-nut and spry as a kitten" in the perennial "Old Homestead"; James A. Herne, puttin' out the cat at night in the contented wordless finale of "Shore Acres"; David Warfield, beloved in our day as the threadbare music-master; Cyril Maude, invading our country and fairly barking his way into our hearts as *Grumpy;* Barney Bernard, playing old *Abe Potash* in comedy after comedy with ever-mellowing art; and now, latest comer to this famous gallery, Frank Bacon as *Lightnin' Bill Jones.*

It is interesting to note that the play which, at the Gaiety Theatre in New York, is having the longest run in the history of the American stage, is another homespun comedy centering in a shabby and lovable old man—an "old man play" as surely as were its great predecessors which made the reputation and the fortunes of Jefferson and Warfield.

It was quite a long time ago that "Lightnin'" began its record-breaking engagement on Broadway. When the boastful old ne'er-do-well first came blinking before the Gaiety footlights, the name of Ludendorf was still a nightmare name and a town called St. Mihiel was still lying paralyzed in possession of the German army. When, last Fall, "Lightnin'" entered upon its second year with vitality unabated, it became apparent that by February of 1920 Mr. Bacon's engagement would pass the proud 604th performance mark set by "Peg o' My Heart" in 1914, and so would establish a new record for the American theatre.

It was equally apparent that Mr. Bacon could play "Lightnin'" for a year or so in London and then meander all over this country with it for the rest of his life. Once more a lifelong rôle has been found; once more it has been demonstrated that the surest way to the heart of the American playgoer is through the rôle of a gentle old man.

No one in this country has ever scored in the rôle of an old woman a success even faintly comparable to these of the Jefferson-Bacon lineage. Is it because an old woman is not so appealing to an audience as an old man? Or is the bare question heretical? Have aging women through the centuries not been suffered to become such good dramatic material? Or is it because the mussy and often drunken states which have made these characters interesting and dramatic would be unendurable when exhibited in women's rôles?

Certainly the dominance of the old man in the English-speaking theatre is a long-established matter: Juliet's nurse, for instance, is no match for *Shylock* or *Lear*, and *Mrs. Hardcastle* is not such a personage as *Mr. Hardcastle.* It would be hardly fair to class the still amatory *Mrs. Malaprop* as an old woman, and no one plays *Meg Merriles* any more.

Nor is a contemporary dramatic literature much richer in exceptions. Perhaps you, being an argumentative sort, suggest "Old Lady 31," quite forgetting that the title rôle of that comedy was not an old lady at all. The player who created it left the company to become a Major in the A. E. F., for *Old Lady 31* was an old man. But, you persist, what about the play they wrote in Paris around the grand old woman of history—St. Genevieve! What of the heroic drama called "The Virgin of Lutetia," which dealt with the great woman who commanded Paris in time of siege and dominated not only its people but its besiegers? Consult the text and you will see that they chose rather

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to dramatize St. Genevieve's girlhood.

Whereat you wonder if the lack of "old woman plays" may not be largely due to the fact that too many able actresses cling desperately to their youth and, from a mixture of vanity and fear, will never under any circumstances pretend they are older than they are. Margaret Wycherly in "The Thirteenth Chair," Marjorie Rambeau in one of her last season's failures, Emma Dunn in several middle-age rôles, and the vastly popular road star, May Robson (long the rejuvenated *Aunt Mary* and more recently the stage embodiment of Mrs. Rinehart's *Tish*)—these are exceptions to the rule. The rule is the one which makes Maude Adams in her forties play the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up, makes Bernhardt in her sixties play the fledgling *Duc de Reichstadt*, and even in her wearied and crippled seventies play *Cleopatra* still.

If Jefferson had waited till he was an old man before donning the white beard of *Rip*, he probably would not have played the part so well, and certainly would not have played the part so often, yet such fame as mellowed and hallowed that impersonation of his is not the work of a single season nor can it be achieved in a single place. It is when such a part has been played not only in New York and one or two of the largest cities but also at all other crossroads of the country that it becomes a national institution and, in time, a national memory. Jefferson, as it happened, played *Rip* off and on for forty years. He was, therefore, a young actor when first he appeared in his famous character. It was at the old Winter Garden in New York on that troubled Christmas Eve when Mr. Lincoln was waiting to take office and the threat of civil war lay like a shadow across America. If you will consult the infallible *Times* of the next day, you will note with interest that it was a pretty poor entertainment, that the applause was hollow and that a short life was all Mr. Jefferson could hope for play or performance.

As a matter of fact, that *Rip* of 1860 was not at all the *Rip* which we remember. Just as Denman Thompson's quarter-century as *Uncle Joshuay* in "The Old Homestead" was preceded by several seasons in a less successful forerunner called "Joshua Whitcomb;" just as Barney Bernard had played *Abe Potash* for several seasons before he put on the current piece known as "His Honor, Abe Potash," so Jefferson's *Rip* really did not take recognizable form until 1865, when he appeared in London in a new version of the Sleepy Hollow legend arranged for him by the great Boucicault. Likewise, though in lesser degree, all these players shifted and modified their performance from season to season, pruning, embellishing, experimenting, ripening. In the hands of an actor like Cyril Maude, for instance, such a rôle as *Grumpy* changes gradually in color and flavor and value; for all the world like a favorite meerschaum pipe.

But it is the youngest of all the grand old men who has the longest New York run to his credit—the longest, that is, if you do not count the brief interval caused by the actors' strike, for, during the recent fracas in the theatre, it must be admitted that Mr. Bacon's entire company trundled up and down Broadway proclaiming wistfully that "Lightnin'" had struck."

Warfield, of course, played "The Music Master" much oftener—has played it in New York alone for more than 1,000 performances. But that total was a matter of several separate engagements. Equally, of course, *Lightnin' Bill* will have to move up and down this country for many years before he will have become known to as many friends as old *Uncle Joshuay*, who in his day bade more than seven thousand audiences, "Come on, all o' ye, and let the scarlet runners chase ye back to childhood." *Lightnin'* has a long, long journey ahead before he can even hope to hold such a place in America's heart as *Rip Van Winkle* held.

"Are we so soon forgot?" Rip used to ask each night. Most of us, yes. But not such as Joe Jefferson. The sweet memory of him is still a pleasant possession of those generations that used to see him stand with uplifted glass and used to hear him call out in benediction, "May you all live long and prosper!"

I Never Cared for Dogs

By Emmett Campbell Hall

I NEVER cared for dogs: they seemed to me
A useless trouble and expense; as when
Tom brought a clumsy puppy home and begged
To be allowed to keep it for his own;
And I, reluctant, gave consent, but charged
That it should stay outdoors. Well, right away
It found and chewed my rubber shoes, and walked
Across the still-wet paint upon the porch;
Then dug a hole to hide a bone, and chose
For that the center of my pansy bed.
And day by day the yelping thing would do
Something of like annoying, wasteful kind.
But Tom wept when I said that it must go—
He loved the little beast, and so it stayed.

That puppy grew into the dog you've seen
Down at the gate to welcome Tom from school,
And from his work, as flying years went by.

Then came The Call, and Tom first answered, "Here!"
He seemed familiar in his uniform
And with his rifle—little different from
His khaki hunting clothes, so that the dog
Could not quite understand, though he turned back
When Tom said, "You can't go this time, old boy."

And then—perhaps you know? Of all the lads
From our little town, my Tom alone—
They sent me these—two crosses. Friends were kind
With words, but somehow, none could understand,
Or so it seemed to me; but presently
That dog, that never had before, uncalled, to me
Now came and put his head upon my knee
And looked into my eyes, his own so grave
And wistful, while to me they seemed to say,
"A little while, and we may go to him,
Since he may not come home to us again."

So that old dog and I, who too am old,
Now sit together in the garden, when
The nights are warm and still, and I gain strength
And surer, clearer faith, and comfort from
The gentle, patient, steadfast soul of him.

Dogs have no souls, you say? So, long thought I,
Before my own was shaken—now I know.

He dug a hole to hide a bone to-day,
Laboriously, for he grows feeble fast,
And doing so my choicest pansies spoiled.
But I—I did not scold, for soon he came
And thrust his head under my hand, so that
It rested where so often Tom's had lain.

Now when the nights are chill, the old dog lies
Upon the rug before the fire, and dreams.
That would please Tom, indeed, if he could know.

It seems to me most strange that for long years
I should have said I did not care for dogs.

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Cabbages and Shoes

By Conrad Richter

"You can consider them presented," said the boy, swinging open the outside door.

HE TORE open the telegram rapidly.

ROBERT MURRAY,
Care of Grainger Co.,
Pennver:
Please come home.
J. MURRAY.

He read it repeatedly. What could be the matter? Might something have happened to his mother? Why didn't his father explain—at least fill out the ten words? It wasn't like him to be so brief. If only they had a telephone on the farm!

He looked at his watch. The next trolley for Three Valleys left at ten o'clock. He showed the telegram to Mr. Jones, the secretary of the concern, then slipped on his coat and hat and left the office. In a half-hour he and his bag were aboard the orange suburban car for Three Valleys.

There was no one to meet him at the little town. Evidently his father had not expected him until later. He pushed his bag under the seat of a Weller Livery rig, and with young Jimmy Weller beside him to bring back the horse, started out along the Friedensburg road.

It was a raw March day. A gray mist hung over the brown fields and sagged among the leafless trees in the woods. The cold drizzle changed to sleet and back to rain again. To a young man of the city fresh from modern city conveniences and attractions, the ride was unexhilarating. Somehow when they reached the cross-roads by the big red maple on the ridge and glimpsed the familiar farm lying below, half in the meadow and half on the adjoining hill, instead of home it seemed like thirty-six acres of loneliness. Except for the curl of smoke above the house chimney and the low call from the barn, the buildings might have been deserted. The rambling orchard was bare of leaf or fruit, the berry patch a succession of red rows of thorny bayonets, and the meadow desolate of marigold, water thrush or cropping cattle. His only satisfaction was that none of the boys from the office was along to see. They would not understand the life his parents led.

At the familiar picket gate he turned the horse about for young Jimmy, wished him a safe journey back, then hurried to the house, habit taking him to the kitchen door. Rust, the dog, was not in evidence—doubtless on one of his periodic collie excursions. At the sound of the latch his mother turned from the stove. Thank God, she was all right; a bit pinched and worried perhaps, but up and active.

"Hello!" He greeted her with a vigorous kiss on the mouth. "What does Dad mean, scaring me with an ultimatum like that?"

"Sh!" She held him convulsively as a mother does. "Your father didn't send the telegram, Robert."

He felt a sudden staggering about the heart.

"Dad's—all right, mother?"

She shook her head. "He hasn't been out of his room since about three weeks on Tuesday."

Bob paled.

"It's his eyes again," went on his mother, her voice choking. "He can tell you the name the doctor called it. The room must stay dark all the time. Just think, Robbie! The doctor says he might never look at sunlight again. He sits there alone in the dark, so patient, Robbie." She began to cry softly.

"Now, now, Mother," soothed Bob, stroking her. "Don't you worry one particle. I'll get the best kind of a doctor for Dad. Maybe it won't take very long. Why in the world didn't you send for me before?"

"I wanted to, Robbie, but he made me promise not to. He was afraid you'd worry about the farm."

"I should say not," declared Bob. "I'll just get Johnny Grimes or Ed Summerhill or somebody to come here and take care of it for you. Wages are high just now, but what's Dad been making money all his life for if he can't take a rest when he needs it?"

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His mother began to sob openly. "Oh, Robbie, your father never made any money here. He didn't want me to tell you, but——"

"Never made money!" exclaimed Bob blankly. "Why, how could he send me to college, mother?"

"He borrowed the money from Squire Meek."

Bob swallowed painfully.

His mother bowed her head and went on: "When the squire wouldn't give any more on the farm, he borrowed from George Good. He told George he hadn't any security but the stock and furniture, and they weren't worth twelve hundred dollars. But George said he'd trust him."

Bob had grown white.

"Oh, Robbie," begged his mother, "don't feel bad toward your father. He didn't want you to grow up and work hard all your life on a farm for nothing, like him. Why, he's lived in Neff township all his life, and he hasn't been a school director or a clerk at election. They never even asked him to be deacon in the church or deal at the Farmers' Bank in Three Valleys. Oh, Robbie, he never said much to anybody—your father doesn't act that way, but he's always wanted to be somebody—so he could feel that he had done something in the world."

She finished piteously. The boy made no reply. For a few minutes he sat bewildered. Then he started up the rag-carpeted stairs. In the dim, cold bedroom a spare form sat wrapped in a red checkered blanket on a rocking-chair near one of the drawn blinds. As Bob opened the door, the figure looked up patiently: "I was wondering, Mother, when we might expect a letter from Bob?"

A guilty tremor shot through the boy as he remembered how little he had written. "Hello, Dad!" he swallowed.

The rocking-chair trembled. "Bob!—I can't see, you know, lad—how did you know?"

The almost imperceptible nudge from his mother was unneeded.

"If a fellow can't run home to see his folks once in a while!" exclaimed the boy.

"I'm not very bad, Bob," said his father earnestly. "A lot better my eyes than my heart giving out. They don't hurt all the time, and then I can sleep; I'll be all right after a while. You mustn't worry or lose time from your business, lad, on account of me. When had you counted on going back?"

"I'm not counting on going back, Dad," answered the boy. "If you and Mother will let me, I'm going to take care of the farm."

"NO, NO, Bob!" excitedly protested the father, trying to rise from his chair. "It isn't worth it. You mustn't take one day from your office."

"I've had to give up office work for a while, Dad," lied the boy. "I'm to work out in the air, the doctor said." For a few moments no one said anything. Bob felt his mother's work-beaten hand slip silently into his.

Late in the afternoon, in felt boots and old clothes, he started on an inspection of the old place, the now returned and repentant Rust galloping joyfully ahead, a vision of shaggy, jolting feather and waving sable plume. He visited the barn first. From around the depleted stack in the barnyard six or seven Jerseys and near-Jerseys gazed at him curiously.

His heart dilated a little as he remembered his father's pathetic efforts to build up a Jersey herd at the smallest possible investment, picking up some unattractive pure-bred animal here and some better looking near-Jersey there. The herd was complete at last. But his father received no more for his butter than the owners of common stock. The cows were not registered. It was doubtful whether any of them could be registered. Their cash value, as a consequence, was little more than the average in the township. Considerable of his father's time and some extra money had been invested in the herd, but what dollars-and-cents profit had it been to him?

Shutting out the dog so he wouldn't convulse the hens, Bob entered the chicken-house. They were a pretty lot—a jealously maintained pure strain of White Rocks. His father had built them a complete home, including muslin-lighted scratching-pens and broad wire-fenced yards. It had cost both time and money, but here was the same story. Certainly the expensive house did not cause the hens to lay eggs enough to pay for the feed they might have saved foraging through barnyard, field and barn.

He went on to the hog-pen, an establishment along similar lines. Considerable valuable ground had been given up to the black fellows on which to remain reasonably sanitary. Their feed was not slop, but a formal menu taken from one of the farm magazines. Bob recalled that his father's smoked ham, his bacon and his personally mixed sausage boasted of a flavor unequaled in the township. But the prices he received for them were not unequaled.

His pure-bred Rock eggs, Jersey butter and tasty pork went to Jerry Mills and Hal Grossman, Pennver hucksters, at the same prices other farmers received. And his product had cost more to produce, even the vegetables and fruit. Bob remembered the infinite pains his father had always taken with each tree, the little extra second spent on each beet, each head of cabbage, each stalk of peas, potatoes and beans.

His neighbors owned no such scruples. As a result they raised more crops in the same length of time. Apparently they were right, his father wrong. A great quantity of a fair quality was what paid, not a fair quantity of great quality.

"Rust," he reflected grimly as the two stood in the orchard overlooking the farm, "the reason your lord and master hasn't made any money at farming is because he ties up more time and money in an apple and an egg than the market says they're worth. Now we can't change the human nature of your lord and master without a lot of trouble and work, and maybe we can't change it at all. What are we going to do about it?"

The dog wagged his tail once; then, at Bob's sober face, humbly dropped it.

"Righto!" declared the boy. "There's only one thing to do, and that is to do that one thing." Thoughtfully he started back toward the house. Rust stalked at his heels with collie dignity, his sable brush swaying slowly with his stride.

The next day Robert journeyed back to the Grainger Company to hand in his resignation. Mr. Jones, secretary of the concern, heard his decision with grave eyes.

"I'm afraid you're making a mistake, Bob. I'll tell you something if you agree to keep it confidential. Last week Mr. Grainger asked me to name our most promising young men so he could keep his eye on them, and help them along as they deserved it. You were one of the five. You've been doing good work here, and we appreciate it. Now when opportunity's just beginning to open up ahead of you, you want to throw up your chances to some one else. Can't you reconsider this a little?"

Bob shook his head dumbly. That afternoon on his way back to the farm he dropped in to see Mr. George Good at his substantial brick house in Three Valleys.

"I'm taking over the farm," he explained in a simple, straightforward manner. "I'm going to try to make it a success so Dad can pay back the money he owes you without selling the stock. I've had some experience on the place before I went to school, but I'm no farmer like Dad. At the same time I've got a training that I think is just as important in farming—I mean a business training."

Good looked frankly disapproving, so Bob went on to explain: "Most farmers can raise crops, but it takes either a business farmer or a lucky one to make money at it, and I'm not going to trust to luck. If you don't mind, I'd like to borrow a thousand dollars on my father's character for security. I have four thousand life insurance. I'll sign one over to you to take care of you in case of my death."

George Good rolled his cigar from one end of his mouth to the other, shifted his legs and eyed Bob quizzically. He was a big man in heart and body. There were people who said his pear-shaped organ ran away with the rest of him.

"I THOUGHT your father had about everything out there a man needs to raise things."

"I don't need the money to raise things," Bob answered quietly. "Father can tell me how to do that. What I need it for is to sell things at a profit that will keep me in business."

"A farmer spend money to sell his own crops?" ejaculated Good.

The boy nodded earnestly. "A farmer's got to look the facts in the face. He's a business man like anybody else. To make a success he's got to have more than quarters, machinery, stock and technical experience. He's got to have an idea to sell and the capital to put it over."

"That there word 'idea' don't sound good to me," said Good.

"I don't mean a pipe-dream," explained the youth. "I mean a farmer's got to have a way of either raising things cheaper than most people or raising them better. And if it's the second way, he's got to have capital to let people find it out and pay him a reasonable profit. That's what I'm up against out there."

Good looked incredulous. "In plain English, young man, you want to spend a thousand dollars to make people pay you more for your stuff than they've got to pay the other fellow."

"You've got it exactly!" cried Bob. "And do it willingly because they know they're getting more value for their money."

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"It ain't solid, economically," declared Good.

"It is—absolutely," said Bob firmly. "It makes Dad and me successful farmers, an asset to the nation."

"You're aiming to boost the price of the thing people have got to have to live."

"You've got to have clothes to live. You've got to pay for quality in clothes."

"What if every farmer did it?"

"For one thing, the country might be a lot healthier. People would eat less and better food. There wouldn't be so much wasted in the fields and other places."

Good looked unconvinced. "All right, my boy. If you want to spend a thousand dollars trying to change the world, have it your way. But you get the money because you're John Murray's boy, not on account of your wild idea. Will you take it for a year or on demand, like your father?"

"If you please, make it on demand," said Bob.

TWENTY-FOUR or forty-eight hours thereafter a definite form of evolution began overtaking the Murray farm. In due time a number of distinct changes might have been noticed. A telephone line had been run across the fields from the pike. The barn and outbuildings had been painted a clean white with green slats and trimmings. The house and outkitchen had received similar jackets. The lawn, vegetable garden, and barnyard fences had been laboriously whitewashed, likewise every post of the wire fences enclosing fields, chicken yards and hog runways. And on the green roof of the barn in letters that could be read for a half-mile had been painted "QUALITY FARM."

When it was finished, Bob could not resist walking out to the big maple at the cross-roads. From here the farm buildings looked like brightly colored toys, set as if under the Christmas tree on a rolling strip of green paper checkered off with white fence-posts. Not a passer-by but who could see where the Murray fields ended and neighbor ownership began.

Meantime Bob had made two little visits to Pennver. The second time he returned with a typewriter and a box of paper and envelopes under the buggy-seat. Both envelopes and paper were distinctive in size and feel. At the top of each sheet, printed in red and black and arranged in pleasing irregularity, were five attractive two-inch cuts. They were respectively a Leghorn pullet, a Jersey cow, a Berkshire hog, an apple-tree and a cluster of vegetables. Underneath in spaced letters was the title "Quality Farm," and beneath it, address and telephone number and—"John Murray, President; Robert Murray, Superintendent."

That evening after supper Bob put the typewriter on the kitchen-table and began addressing envelopes to a list of the better families of Pennver, secured from John Greth, one of the older *Eagle* reporters. When the envelopes were finished he took up the letter-heads, half of which had been imprinted with a circular letter with type and inking that matched his typewriter and ribbon. These he filled in with names and salutations from the envelopes.

This was the letter:

What do you know about the farm products you and your family are putting into your mouths?

Is the cow that furnishes the cream for your butter a sick mongrel or a healthy thoroughbred? Is she kept in weedy pasturage or perhaps in a none-too-clean barnyard, or in a clean shed and in a meadow of tender, juicy grass?

What sort of feed goes to make up the eggs you eat? Do the hens forage through barnyard and pig-pen, or are they kept in sanitary quarters where they receive clean, nutritious feed?

How about the vegetables, the fruit and the pork you eat? How were they grown and cared for? What sort of hands touched them?

Quality Farm has been established to give the discriminating people of Pennver a service of Quality Farm products at the cost to produce quality regardless of current market prices.

Its Jersey cows range contentedly in a fresh green meadow. Its flocks of pure-bred White Rocks live in clean airy yards, and are fed clean wholesome grains. Its vegetables are nourished by a rich brown meadow, and are coaxed to absorb the last drop of sunshine and dew. Its fruit is grown on healthy trees.

All Quality Farm products are packed in handsome individual containers and delivered by the Quality Farm truck, whose calling at your door means added distinction to your household.

Only a limited number of patrons can be accepted, the first few. Please return the card to-day. Yours very truly,

ROBERT MURRAY,
Superintendent.

This was the card, numbered, stamped and self-addressed to ROBERT MURRAY, Superintendent, Quality Farm, Three Valleys, R. D.:

DEAR MR. MURRAY:

We are interested in Quality Farm products at the price it costs to produce quality. When your deliveries are about to begin, call us up for our order. Very truly,

For a week the Murray rural mail-box was loaded to the galvanized lid with letters for the carrier. Before the last lot had gone, the cards had begun to come back. Out of the several dozen finally received but two or three were marked "not interested." Only one had a discouraging effect. Along the margin the writer had scrawled, "Quality—your eye!" Bob looked him up in the telephone book, finding his name from the number on his card. He was a wholesaler in butter, eggs, and other farm products. That afternoon he went to Pennver and ordered a light delivery car of a certain well-known and popular-priced make. On each glinting side he directed that "Quality Farm" be painted in distinctive gold letters. Part of the purchase price he paid in cash. The remainder he arranged to take care of in monthly payments.

Early in April Bob worked the rich muck soil of the truck patches into velvet powder, and began planting beets, carrots, cabbage, lettuce, onions, radishes and turnips. Nightly he went to his father in the darkened bedroom and received minute instructions regarding each vegetable—the exact date for planting, the number of seeds to a bed, the distance seeds and plants should be placed apart in rows, the distance rows should be apart for horse cultivation, the depth of planting, the use of manures, fertilizer and lime.

In the latter part of April he began planting Lima and string beans, sweet corn, cucumbers and tomatoes. It was a trifle early, his father admitted, but it had been an unusually early spring. Fruit trees soon were a glory of loveliness. His father in his bedroom wistfully pleaded that the window be raised each day so that he might drink in the welcome fragrance of the new year.

Practically every evening the boy spent with his father in the dim room. When there was no immediate instruction, he turned questioner, and began to get at approximate cost figures for each vegetable, each pound of butter, each dozen of eggs. He had had cost-accounting experience at the Grainger Company. But he found that finding the cost of shoe manufacturing was a simple problem in arithmetic beside this.

He was compelled to ask his father a thousand questions, to refer to his mother's memory and the farm accounts again and again. Finally a scale of cost figures was estimated. In each item he had reckoned the cost or value of seed, lime, fertilizer and manure; imaginary rental for the land, quarters and implements involved; the cost of delivery; certain depreciations ranging from five to fifteen per cent.; a ten per cent. profit for the farm dividend or surplus; and a proportionate share of three salaries: one for himself as superintendent, one for his mother as manager of the cows and chickens, and a modest one for his father as director.

Everything progressed smoothly until well along in May. He had begun making weekly deliveries of butter and eggs. To his relief only one customer complained of Quality Farm prices. Others paid as if highly satisfied with their opportunity of securing quality goods. Many of them, by their attitude, seemed to take a certain human pride in paying more for their table products than other folks. Bob felt enthusiastic. And at the wheel of his good-looking car, he experienced a sense of ownership and physical prowess that he had never noticed in office work.

ON THE third trip to the city he noticed in the *Pennver Eagle* a dispatch from Washington forecasting a cold wave. The thermometer in Chicago had reached twenty-eight above. There had been snow in Omaha and at Detroit the weather was freezing.

"And nearly June," thought Bob incredulously. "It'll never get that cold in here."

When he returned from the barn that evening, he noticed a sharp northwest wind bearing down through the orchard. By ten o'clock the thermometer had fallen to forty degrees. He went to bed uneasily, yet not wishing to alarm his father by asking him what, if anything, might be done. He awoke the next morning with the realization that he was shivering. He jumped hastily out to the rag carpet. The wind had settled during the night, and a thick gray frost covered the landscape.

The cold snap lasted nearly a week, raining for a day or two, then freezing up tight, breaking the record for many years. Throughout the northern end of the state fruit and berry crops were ruined. Bob's beans, sweet corn, cucumbers and tomatoes were wiped out. Even some of the hardier vegetables had wilted and turned black. Sick at heart, he tried to cheer his mother and keep the knowledge of disaster from his father, who felt badly enough over the sudden

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Pouff

A Story in Which Fate Plays a High Hand

By George Randolph Chester

FATE, smilingly busy with the tragedy of Francesco Boppi, glanced up as a swiftly fleeting shadow swept athwart her. It was the shadow of Time, and he paused an instant at her desk; for Time and Fate have many dealings together.

"Why have you ordered this?" quavered the visitor, waving his lean hand toward Earth.

"Oh, that?" and Fate, pushing back a golden ringlet from her brow, glanced downward. "It was my destiny. It was written on my card!"

Together they somberly studied humanity. It had painted his face blue, its eyebrows purple, its lips green; and pet snakes had taken the place of canary birds.

"Oh, I remember!" suddenly shrilled the old voice of Time. "This was to be the sign!"

Fate, with a significant smile, took a crystal casket from her safe. It contained a single red card engrossed in letters of fire. Time bent over her eagerly, and looked at the writing upon it, and laughed his senile laugh; then he laid his scythe and his hour-glass on the desk, and sat down, and rubbed his rheumatic knees.

"The sign!" His voice rose to a broken treble. "At last!" He rubbed and rubbed his knees. "I am so old," he cackled, grinning, and mowing, and nodding his bald head. "So old, so old!"

"On your way," directed Fate crisply, and handed him his scythe and hour-glass, though there was a kindly smile upon her beautiful features.

"Yes, yes," he answered, straightening his creaking joints and suppressing a moan as he rose, then he spread his tattered wings and launched out into space, while Fate, reminded of her own duty, took up again the card of Francesco Boppi.

II

A HUGE glass dome beneath a starry sky; a long black tube, like a monster cannon, angling up; a maze of intricate mechanism, and a silence like thought itself.

Into this temple of drowsing inquiry came a little old man, with a large head and a long white beard. He looked at his watch, and laid off his flap-brimmed hat, and put his spectacles in his pocket, and twisted the thread around a loose button on his coat, and hunted a peppermint lozenge in his vest pocket, and methodically set in motion the machinery which pointed his telescope to altitude 32°, 17′, 54.692477″, and longitude 42°, 30′, 01.835186″. Sucking contentedly at his lozenge, Professor Wilple applied his eye to his telescope, and gazed and gazed. Six wrinkles sprang across his smooth and shining forehead, and his shaggy white eyebrows knotted into a fringe. The brilliant comet of Lacrie was *not* in range!

Much troubled, the professor inspected his altitude and his longitude. Both were correct! Much more troubled, he swallowed his peppermint lozenge and went over to his desk, and for the next hour and a half busied himself with a hasty mathematical test extended to sixty decimal places. His calculations had been correct! The comet of Lacrie, the largest and most brilliant of all the comets, and the one which swept nearest the earth, should have traveled fifty thousand miles since his observation of the night before, and should now be exactly in 32°, 17′, 54.629477″ and 42°, 30′, 01.835186″!

Having satisfied himself thoroughly on this point, Professor Wilple again confidently applied his eye to his telescope. The comet of Lacrie was *not* in his range. Now, for the first time, the professor looked up into the sky. There was the comet, blazing like a small sun, its white tail streaming across a third of the heavens. Amazed, Professor Wilple moved back his telescope until the head of the comet was in the field, then he measured altitude and longitude, and felt his cheeks chill stiff. The comet of Lacrie had not moved an inch in the last twenty-four hours! Impossible! Utterly impossible! It was absolutely beyond the capabilities of physics for a body moving at the tremendous momentum of this one to suddenly stop.

Paralyzed by this stupendous abnormality, Professor Wilple took down the transmitter of his wireless telephone, and put himself in communication with the Standard Glue observatory a thousand miles away. The voice of Professor Snootz was quivering with excitement. He was not only able to corroborate Professor Wilple's discovery of this marvelous phenomenon, but he was also able to say that the apparent diameter of the head of the comet had perceptibly increased by decimal, twelve figures, plus!

Marvelous! Astounding! Tremendous! Overwhelming! There was a quick consultation among all the astronomers of the world, and the matter was of such grave import that it was decided to keep the phenomenon a secret for the next twenty-four hours.

On the second night, which was Saturday, every astronomer was at his telescope with the first peep of the Lacrie comet above the horizon. Professor Wilple was compelled to eat three peppermint lozenges before he could trust himself to look into his telescope, which had been left at its angle of the two preceding evenings. The comet of Lacrie was exactly in range. In forty-eight hours it had not moved from its position in the heavens, and its head was quite visibly broader and brighter. There was another striking peculiarity. The tail was shorter by a thousand miles, and its curve had changed to a sharper parabola!

The conclusion was inevitable: The comet had not stopped. It had only changed its direction, and now, dragging its tail straight behind, it was coming toward the earth at a speed increasing in proportion to the square of the distance traversed!

There were no further grounds for speculation; no reason to indulge in theory; the thing was a settled fact. Professor Wilple, popping a fresh peppermint lozenge in his mouth, went over to his desk, and began calculating the weight of the Lacrie comet, its precise velocity at the time of its impact with the earth, and the exact instant of its arrival.

III

FRANCESCO BOPPI, he of the many white teeth and the smiling eyes, bent low in the garden day by day, and trimmed the rose-bushes, snipping with the delicate

He climbed the rope hand over hand, swinging like a pendulum, his soft brown eyes upturned to the forward deck.

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care of a surgeon. There came no cares to Francesco Boppi. Were there rumors of a war against church and state in Italy? "I trimma da rose," said the limpid voice of Francesco, his brown face lighting and his brown eyes softening. Did the price of provisions go up or down, did there come excessive heat in summer or excessive cold in winter, did there come any of the thousand and one incidents in life which other men might rave over? "I trimma da rose," said Francesco Boppi, standing short and broad and square amid his beloved blossoms.

There was one rose which Francesco had watched for days, a soft, flesh-pink bud, on his own bush near the gate of the gardener's cottage; and each morning he visited that first, watched the bud swelling, and the tips of the petals begin to curl away from their tight clasp upon each other, until at last came the hour when it spread half open, slyly revealing the deep, velvety pink of its heart.

When the evening days had begun to gather, Francesco, the melting song of Napoli on his lips, came back from his labors of that day, with a touch so deft that not even one tiny drop of the dew was disturbed, he clipped the perfect rose from its gracefully bending stem. His eyes shining with joy, his white teeth gleaming in his smile of happiness, he went into the cottage.

"Benedetta!" he called, and the name was music. "Benedetta!"

There was a strange emptiness in the little living-room, with its dashes of gay color. There was only the blessed Madonna in her gilt niche on the wall, with the tiny oil-flame burning before her.

Out into the little kitchen, clean and spotless, with its row of shining pans on the shelf.

"Benedetta!"

No voice, soft as the song of the thrush amid the sloping vineyards of beautiful Sorrento, to answer that call.

Up into the little bedroom, with that rose still held before him on its delicately bending stem; the exquisite rose of flesh pink.

"Benedetta! *Benedetta!*"

Down into the garden now, through the tiny arbor, to the bird-cage-like summer-house surmounted by its painted rooster.

"Benedetta! Benedetta! Benedetta!"

"He, he, he!" croaked an old voice from beyond the summer-house. Angelica Muigi, bent and withered, and a hater of beauty since it had so long left her. "Gone!" she shrilled. "Gone with your friend of the guitar! Enrico! Gone, Francesco; gone! He, he, he!"

Francesco Boppi crushed the flesh-pink rose under his heel, and ground and ground it again. He wasted no words on withered Angelica, but he dashed up into the house and felt under the mattress. The money; it was gone, too! Everything of value was gone except the blessed Madonna and one long, keen-bladed knife. He blew out the candle before the Madonna and cursed the image; then he stuck the knife in its sheath beneath his arm, and rushed straight out for the road; and his teeth were still gleaming; and as he went he trampled rose-bushes!

IV

TREMENDOUS sensation! The world was coming to an end! No such magnificent piece of news had ever been chronicled! In exactly one month not a single human being would be left alive on the face of the globe! Could you beat that for a startler!

The comet of Lacrie, always dangerously slow and dangerously near, had at last come within the earth's sphere of gravitation, and was now rushing earthward at a speed so great that its expression in figures meant nothing!

This is what would happen: The comet, a molten mass of material larger than the moon, had left its orbit on Friday, at approximately 3 A.M.; as all the famous astronomers in the world had agreed. It had started at a velocity of fifty thousand miles an hour; the second hour it had traveled a hundred thousand miles, and so on. It would grow larger and more brilliant every night, until it filled the sky, and, in a blinding blaze, would descend upon the earth on the seventeenth of the following month. Its impact would be so terrific that immediately the terrestial planet would burst into flame and be entirely consumed.

Never in all the history of journalism had there been so glorious an opportunity to shock the public, and every newspaper, particularly those in the United States, took full advantage of that opportunity. They displayed pictures, maps, and illustrative diagrams which made the extent of the horrifying cataclysm plain to the dullest intelligence, and they used such powerful descriptive language as had never before been put into print.

The public was highly interested. It read the startling accounts with avidity, and turned to the comic supplements, and perused the classical literature in the dry-goods advertisements. As for belief, the public had not one scintilla of it; and indeed how could it have. The tremendous sensation was first published in the Sunday papers.

It was a slightly graver matter when, on Monday, the papers were filled with accounts of the three-cornered quarrel led by those famous astronomers, Professor Wilple of the Standard Steel Company University, and Professor Snootz of the Standard Glue Company University, and Professor Snikoff of the Standard Caviar Company University at Moscow. Professor Wilple had stated that the comet would strike the earth at 2:07 A.M., on the seventeenth; Professor Snootz calculated that it would strike at 2:27 of that same morning. Professor Snikoff at 2.59; and each of these three famous scientists had his followers throughout the world.

On Tuesday morning the public turned to its papers with a trace of serious attention, and let its coffee get cold while it read the comet news. Ah! Professor Maup of the Standard Millinery Company University, of Paris, laughed at his colleagues. It was true that the comet of Lacrie was headed for the earth, but it would never reach its destination. The velocity it would attain in its downward rush would give it such friction, as soon as it touched the envelope of the earth's denser atmosphere, that it would be turned into gas and go up in a magnificent blaze. There would not even be a fleck of ashes as a relic of the tremendous conflagration. The heat, so far as it affected humanity, would be nil, since the comet, at the time of its disappearance from the heavens, would be traveling at a speed faster than the rate of heat waves.

On the following day, Professor On Yun, of the Standard Opium Company University, of Peking, chided his colleagues for having unnecessarily frightened mankind.

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As all scientists knew, comets were composed of a gaseous nucleus so volatile and attenuated that the descent of the comet of Lacrie upon the earth would be absolutely unnoticed, except for a possible residue of fine star dust, such as had often fallen. It would be, in fact, like passing through the garments of a ghost.

After the communications of Maup and On Yun, the public no longer read the comet sensations. Charley Vantyler, one of the brightest minds of his times, had started a fad of having pet fish for surf bathing, and Mrs. Spuyten Park had given a nut party at which the guests sat up in trees and chattered. So the world wagged on.

V

THE big whistles on the steamer *Friscatti* boomed out its strident warning; the gangplanks rolled back; the hawsers were drawn in; only one rope connected the long, high, dingy craft with the pier. It was then that Francesco Boppi, with a great mission in life, rushed down through the dock, and scanned the deck-rails with his soft brown eyes. There were hundreds of faces up forward, but Francesco saw only two; Benedetta, with the glow of the damask rose in her olive-tinted cheeks, and Enrico, with a green velvet hat perched jauntily on his curly black hair. They gazed down at Francesco with the gay and care-free smile which only Naples knows, as the dock hands prepared to cast off the only remaining hawser; for two screaming tugs were already straining to jerk and bustle the *Friscatti* into the river, and out of the bay, and across the sea to blue Napoli.

There was a sudden startled cry from both those on the boat and those on the dock. Francesco Boppi had sprung up the straining rope, and was climbing it, hand over hand, swinging like a pendulum, his soft brown eyes upturned to the forward deck, and his white teeth gleaming.

He even smiled like the Francesco who had trimmed the roses, as he saw the suddenly widening eyes and blanching cheeks of his friend and his wife.

For a moment the climbing figure held his audience silent, then there were sharp commands from the deck and hoarse warnings from the dock, while little, dark-skinned officials from both places gesticulated wildly; then passengers and onlookers set up a mighty shout. If the dock end of the rope were to be cast off, Francesco would be dashed against the side of the ship; if the ship's end were loosed he would be snapped against the dock. The rose gardener, alone of all that throng, paid no heed to his danger.

He climbed the rope hand over hand, swinging like a pendulum, his soft brown eyes upturned to the forward deck, and his white teeth gleaming; and the *Friscatti*, slowly backing into the river, was under such ponderous momentum that not even the sturdy little tugs could stop her—and the rope strained and creaked.

Fate solved that dilemma. With keen interest in the affairs of Francesco, she broke the rope in two places at once, above him and below him, and he dropped like a shot. Even as he fell he did not look downward. His soft brown eyes were still fixed on Enrico and Benedetta. As he went under the churning surface of the water, he saw on the faces of his guitar-playing friend and his sweet-faced wife the gay and care-free smile which only Naples knows.

Where Francesco Boppi fell was home. He had dived for pennies in the Bay of Naples, and in the water he had the instinct of a fish. He came up under the dock in place of in the slip. If he were to reappear now he would be hooked out, and asked many questions, and might possibly be sent to jail; and he was too busy to bother with jail. With the guile of a true Neopolitan he waited where he was, and let them hunt for his body, and, between the piles, he watched the *Friscatti* move down toward the bay, and in the dimness his white teeth gleamed.

At dead of night, Francesco slipped out, and went to a padrone who had a pull, and told his simple story. The padrone, his eyes gleaming like Francesco's teeth as he listened, secured Francesco a job on *La Patrie*, which left next day for Havre. It was a six-day boat. The *Friscatti*, Naples bound, would be twelve days on the journey.

The hands which had fondled the petals of roses, and trimmed tiny twigs with the deft care of a surgeon, wielded a shovel in the furnace hell of *La Patrie;* but through it all, in the stifling hold where the heat burned his lungs and blistered his eyes, and scorched at the very well-springs of his life, Francesco's soul sang, and his white teeth gleamed.

HAVRE. The trimmer of roses might have had a job on another boat, Naples-bound, had he waited, for he was a hard and willing worker, and there was appeal in his soft brown eyes, sympathy in his gentle smile, and there was no time. Life might be long, but it could not be sweet while Francesco's one great mission was unperformed. So he went to Paris with the ship's train. The railroad was swifter, and perhaps his luck might be good by land.

Fate held him in the Gare St. Lazare until old Umberto di Azzani came, laden with twelve pieces of hand-luggage, two porters and the gout.

"Ah!" cried Francesco, with all the sliding modulation of a flute, and seizing the hand of Umberto he covered it with kisses; for Francesco Boppi had been born on the Azzani estates, and old Umberto had beaten him many times.

To his aforetime lord and master, then, the gardener told his simple story. Umberto di Azzani, his eyes gleaming like Francesco's teeth as he listened, gruffly produced money to buy a third-class ticket, and pointed out his luggage, and stalked on into the train.

So it was that Francesco Boppi stood on the dock in Naples when the *Friscatti*, out in the harbor, discharged her passengers, and his soft brown eyes inspected every face in each tender as it came ashore, while all his white teeth gleamed.

At last! He recognized them as they came down the landing stairs of the steamer. He knew Benedetta by the very poise of her body, which he had so often likened to the stem of a rose, in its yielding grace. He knew Enrico by the jaunty tilt of his head and by the guitar swung on his back. Something sang in the breast of Francesco, sang sweet music, and there was a red mist before his eyes. He was very glad that he had not gone out to the ship. In all that confusion there might have been some mischance in his great mission. So he waited on the dock, watched those two figures step into the tender, and never removed his gaze from them as they started ashore.

They saw him, saw his soft brown eyes fixed on them and his white teeth gleaming; and their hearts stopped beating. Was it Francesco come back from the dead? The last they had seen of him he had dropped into the waters of the Hudson, and he had not come up. Now he was here before them, waiting! It was impossible! It was a ghastly thing, this gleefully smiling wraith which had swam ahead of them under the sea!

Appalled, they gazed in terror. Involuntarily they pulled back on their seats as if they might stop the boat, and Enrico reached for an American revolver, which he carried inside his belt; but they were cold and nerveless fingers which laid hold on the handle. There was a moment of deathlike silence in which those three looked at each other with all their eyes.

Suddenly the bay seemed to empty itself of its waters and toss them into the air! The *Castel del Oro* had disappeared, and in its place rose great clouds of hissing steam, which rolled down and hid all the wreckage that had been wrought. Out of the sky had fallen a white hot meteor of iron ore the size of a cathedral!

Francesco Boppi stood where he had stood, for his part of the dock had been kept solid under his feet by the intervention of Fate. He stood where he had stood, and his soft brown eyes vainly pierced the rolling steam in every direction; and all his white teeth gleamed.

The meteor! That was what aroused the world to its doom! The public, satisfied with the fact that the sun was shining every day and that water still ran down-hill, had permitted the comet of Lacrie to increase in size each night, and to ride at the head of its tail in place of sidewise of it. Only the scientists had retained an interest in it, but no two of them agreed. Nor did they agree on the meteor of Naples. Professor Wilple proved that it was the sole projectile of a volcanic eruption in the comet; Professor Snootz showed conclusively that the comet had disintegrated, and was coming along in chunks; every equally eminent astronomer held a different theory, and each sat up of nights to prove his contention to the world.

THE world did not give a hoot, except for the one appalling central fact. The world's precious life was in immediate jeopardy, so it promptly fell on its hunkerbones, and prayed! My, what a soul disturbance there was on the face of the globe! Every business of life was suspended, and repentance set in with a vengeance. Sincere repentance, too! From pole to pole, and from longitude nothing around and back again, the earth was a resounding babble of moan and prayer. A mad terror seized all humanity. It writhed in craven fear; and how it *did* repent! From dusk to dawn, night after night, all the denizens of all the countries kept their eyes fixed on the sky and their thoughts on eternity, while their voices were used only for prayers of propitiation, and shrieks of fright, and cries for mercy! It had suddenly dawned on humanity how foolish it had been to lead a wicked

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life; how much more blessed to be peaceful of soul than gratified of body.

There was another horror. As doom drew near, humanity, even in the midst of its earnest and sincere repentance, recognized this piteous spiritual truth; that repentance born out of dread is not so convincing as repentance born out of an humble desire to be better. And therein lay the woe of the world! That was why those last two weeks of the comet were filled with such anguish!

The hum of industry had stopped. No factory wheel turned, no locomotive glided along its iron rails, no gaunt steel building prinked itself in stone and plaster. There was heard only the tolling of solemn bells, and the voices of the doomed in wailing prayer. And the comet of Lacrie hurled on and on.

VI

IN ALL Naples there was but one man who did not pray, as the comet grew larger in the heavens. It was Francesco Boppi. He scarcely slept, he scarcely ate, and he never looked at the sky. His short, square body trudged up and down the stairs of the narrow, twisting, winding streets, and his soft brown eyes gazed into every doorway, into every dim corner, into every window, while his white teeth gleamed. In all the parks and all the market-places he walked, and along the bay! and Fate carefully whisked from his sight, a dozen times, the thing for which he sought.

Searching in Naples was easy now, for the stooping to peer into bent faces; for the nights were brilliant as the days. The great molten ball in the sky was very near. It was like yellowed silver, and was surrounded by a nebulous halo, from which shot great, quivering streaks of vari-colored light. It was beautiful. And the earth turned beneath it, keeping it always in the night, and as the several countries of the globe whirled within its ever-increasing radiance, it saw all men reduced to a common level. Black and white and yellow and red, Christian, Mohammedan, Brahmin, and heathen. Saxon and Latin and Ethiop and Mongol, they were all praying, their faces upturned to the sky, their hands clasped, and their voices beseeching in a wail which girdled the seas and the continents.

Hunger stopped in that last tremendous week, and love ceased, and hate. There was nothing left but fear. Francesco Boppi felt no fear. He had in him something which was greater, which could sustain him in the face of all catastrophe, and under the copper glow of the sun or the yellowed silver illumination of the comet, he walked the highways and byways of Naples, his soft brown eyes searching endlessly.

Woe and woe and woe! Doom and devastation, thou art at hand! In all the universe there is no escape for our poor, poor, pitiful lives that we have held of so much account, forgetting all those other myriad lives which have passed before in their natural courses. In all the world there is no place to hide, and there is no breast upon which to find comfort. Woe, woe, woe!

The last night but four, and the comet swirled into the night sky like a golden dome. Its very increase in size was a dreadful thing, and its coming was the herald of a shriek which swept from the east in exact pace with its yellow radiance. The prayers were louder this night than they had been before, and many stood and raised their up-turned palms to the dazzling orb of destruction.

The third night but one. The onrushing comet had doubled its size, and the tense quiet which had waited its coming broke into terrified shouts.

The second night but one. The comet filled a third of the sky; and now, for the first time, it added a new and more dreadful terror than all. Through the gaseous envelope which shielded the eye from its intolerable radiance, it could be seen to visibly increase its diameter moment by moment, and all the earth fell a-whimpering.

The next night but one. Half the heavens were filled with that majestic circle, in which were darting flashes and puffing fires and rolling clouds of red smoke; and distant rumblings as of far-off peals of thunder could be heard. Pandemonium answered pandemonium. The human pygmies rushed to and fro, shouting and imprecating! There were some who stood calm, arms folded, and clear eyes gazing upward, waiting patiently their time. There were some who bared their souls, and found them clean as human souls could be, with all the imperfections the Creator had allowed in them; and these, too, were calm, except for the natural shrinking of the body. There were some who, in their terror, could not, and some who had ceased out of an overwhelming knowledge of their guilt. There were some who went stark, staring mad, and some who raved and some who died of fright.

(*Continued on page 127*)

Fate calmly touching a button, loosed the sheath, and the long, keen knife was poised above Enrico's heart, and the brown eyes looked softly down into the terrified black ones, while the white teeth gleamed.

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Arpeggio

By Zona Gale

Author of "Peace in Friendship Village," "Birth," etc.

Here is a story about small towns, and about a small-town official who got gloriously out of the beaten-path. This quaint and lovable "Arpeggio" is soon to appear in another story by Zona Gale.

THE night of the spring elections the little town of Banning went to bed in a spirit of unbelief. It awoke next morning to March wind, bright sun, bursting crocuses, and the truth confirmed: That they had elected Arpeggio Shadd to town commissioner.

"It ain't possible," said Stack Mayhew, the long-term commissioner, "I tell you, it hain't happened."

Purcell Dodd, the other commissioner, clasped his fingers and closed one eye. "What ain't happened does happen," he returned, in sublime freedom. "Arpeggio's in all right, by heck and by hick."

This was the word that flew over Banning—"Arpeggio's in"; and nobody talked of anything else. A great many added: "What next?" And Stack Mayhew settled down to telling about it to dazed groups, who listened as if repetition might at last become explanation.

"A flook, that's what it is—a pure flook. There's been a monotony about this here town that's been just the same. Now it's broke—by a pure flook; and Arpeggio's in."

Which was to say: The term of an unpopular commissioner expiring, the "wide-opens" had introduced to a listless Banning one Barney Foil as the great white hope. Word went out that Barney was to go in, no matter what and no matter who. James Pardee, the reform candidate, had, however, too much open support for the comfort and quiet of the opposition, and they cast about for an independent candidate to take away certain of his votes. Church partisanship seemed as good a tool as another, and Arpeggio Shadd and James Pardee represented distinct faiths. Arpeggio, who was the census-taker, had little to do, and when they signed his petition and brought it to him, he plucked at an Adam's apple of undue prominence, and said that he hadn't gone out after this thing, but if his country called him, it was all one to him. And he ran.

"Understand this, though," he said, "I won't do a dum thing. I won't spend a dum cent. I'm makin' my garden and I can't be bothered."

He brought his hand over his hair, which was combed straight from his crown to his brow, and glared at them.

SO WHILE James Pardee and Barney Foil campaigned and electioneered and treated and filed expense accounts, Arpeggio planted and hoed, and gave his thought to a grape-arbor that he wanted from his door to his gate. Arpeggio lived with his mother, and they raised doves and had a strawberry bed.

From the first, James Pardee lost in popular favor. As a lawyer who never pleaded a case, who was constantly consulted, who had acquired a little property and who sent his daughter to college, Banning looked up to him. But as soon as he began to speak at mass-meetings, he waned; his rhetorical habits, his tart smartness, and more than these, an insupportable manner, caused one of those swings of public sentiment which are as potent as principle.

"Pardee, he's a good man and a good lawyer," Purcell Dodd had observed, "but as a candidate, you want to knock him dau-wn."

On the other hand Barney, round-faced, round-eyed, round-mouthed, with just the right amount of compunction for old abuses, and just the right shade of certainty that the wish of his party was to adjust those abuses while retaining individual liberty—Barney, mantling with good stories, drew votes to himself from sun to sun. When at evening he dressed in checks, drove with his willowy wife on a high seat, over red wheels and behind a black horse, Banning said to Banning's self that here was a commissioner worthy its fealty.

TWO days before election, there came a morning of summer. Banning opened its doors, sat on its porches, put up its awnings, and sprinkled its walks. Everybody was down-town, and finding excuses to stay about doing nothing. When the eleven-twenty-one came in (known in Banning as "The Through") and the Clarke House bus rattled up Cook Street, everybody saw the pretty, black-eyed, maternal woman, with a vigorous little boy, who alighted. But "Bark" Clarke, the host, all but fell to the floor when, in a clear practised hand, she wrote on the fly-specked register:

"Mrs. Barney Foil and child."

Clarke, who was a Foil man, promptly threw the register into the safe and locked it there. The traveling men who arrived later were asked to register on the back of the calendar. But with all his loyalty, Clarke could not put the lady in the safe and lock her up too. She walked forth, and Clarke had barely time to reach Barney, when her inquiries and confidences in the shops of the town spread the tale to willing ears. Barney blustered, but truth travels wingless. Barney was arrested for bigamy and baled out by his sorrowful supporters, who forthwith sent out word: "Anything to beat Pardee. Arpeggio goes in. We can lead him by the nose."

Arpeggio went in. His only effort to get himself elected was to vote for himself, and he grumbled at having to leave his fence-mending to go and do that.

"One vote won't elect me," he contended. "You leave me finish this here before it gets dark."

"Go and vote, son," said his mother. "You go and vote for you—for me."

"Well," said Arpeggio, "for you I'll go." And went, in his overalls, with his ears sticking out widely from his cap. His mother still tried to have him tuck his ears under his cap, which he never had done, and his ears so testified.

WHEN they came to tell him that he was elected, it was nearly eleven o'clock. The Shadds had no telephone, and not being able to discover him about town, Barney's late cooperators drove out to his house on the edge of the town, and the bets were on his being tucked up in bed. But he wasn't. Though there were no lights in the house, Arpeggio was sitting on the steps. He came down and met them at the gate, and when they began shouting the news, the first thing he said was:

"Say, I'm going to ask you fellows to tone down a little. Ma's a light sleeper. And if she gets woke up she can't go to sleep again!"

"All right," they whispered; "but you're elected. You're in, Shadd—you're in! Come along with us!"

They couldn't understand him. He stood there in the dark and laughed.

"Gall o' bitterness!" said he. "Ain't that a joke on me?"

What joke, they wished to know, blankly.

"Well," he said, "I ain't nobody. And here I got to get used to feeling smart."

"Come along, come along!" they cried impatiently.

"I'll tell you what," said Arpeggio. "Yesterday I climbed all over my house getting the leaves out o' my eaves-trough. I got quite a consider'ble stretch of eaves-trough. And I'm so blame lame it's a punishment to move. You go ahead. I've got me some chloroform liniment, and I guess by to-morrow——"

They laughed so loudly that he looked nervously toward the house. Purcell Dodd took the moment for his own.

"All right," he said, "but lame or not, don't you forget for a minute who elected you, Shadd. You're Barney's proxy, that's what you are."

"Barney's *what?*" Arpeggio interrogated.

"You're him—you're Barney, that's what," they made it clear. "It's up to you to do like Barney would 'a' done."

"Oh," said Arpeggio.

They went away. He stood in the path until the sound of the car had died. The garden was still. He could hear a sleepy coo from the dove-cote; he could smell the fresh earth. He was filled by the tide of

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immeasurable well-being, a great soft sense of joy and surprise.

He took off his shoes on the porch and went into the house. The lock made no sound, because he did not remember to turn it. He tiptoed through the sitting-room, and his mother called. In her bedroom, off his room, she was sitting up in bed.

"Arpeggio," she said, "I thought I heard 'em say——"

He answered: "You did. I am."

"I knew you'd be," she said calmly.

He sat on the edge of her bed. He was laughing again, and incessantly flattening his smooth hair.

"Mother," he said, "it's awful funny. Commissioner!"

"I always knew," she said, "you'd get to be something. When you were census-taker, I thought it must be that."

Arpeggio lay awake all night—he did that deference to the situation. He heard his mother stirring and knew that she too was awake, and his heart was warm. Just what did you have to do to be commissioner? He wished he knew whether the library had any books about this.

AT DAWN he rose. He went out to his garden and wandered about, looking at the first buds. The sun came up gloriously, and three times, or four, he found himself standing still, thinking. There would be a regular salary now. Now they could have the grape-arbor. But perhaps there would be no time to build it. He was worried lest to be a commissioner would take time from his garden. He thought of something else. This was the census year. He had loved that work of going into all the houses and inquiring about everybody. Now he could not do this any more. When he went in to breakfast, his face was clouded.

"I don't know whether I like this commissioner's business," he declared.

His mother laughed. "You haven't been at it very long yet," she reminded him.

She was in body a woman of some other generation—inelastic, figureless, heelless. But her mind was awake. Once she had longed to be a musician, a harp-player. She had never even heard a harp played, but she had read all that she could find about harp-playing. When her baby came, she named him Arpeggio.

When Arpeggio went outside again, the two little Wanderer children, who lived next door, were just coming in at his gate. Jess, who was seven, carried a bouquet of grass and small, undiscoverable flowers. Peter's offering consisted of shouts.

"Dad says you're a-lected!" he shrieked. "An' the circus is coming!"

"A-lected!" cried Jess, dancing. "An' I'm going to see a sea-lion!"

Arpeggio stood looking down at them. They were human enough, and with hands already dirty even at this hour. But something about them always gave Arpeggio pause. He felt as if he were before that which was—other. He was abashed. He touched awkwardly at the girl's fine hair, and flushed when she dodged away from him.

"I tell you what," he said. "Will you both go to the circus with me?"

He smiled and glowed at their shouting, and went down-town holding the absurd little bouquet, warm from the little girl's hand.

Arpeggio began his term with a pleasant sense of importance. He had enjoyed the gratulation which he had received. In spite of himself, he enjoyed the touch of respect in the manner of the "Banning business men"—to be given good morning as a ceremony instead of a parenthesis. Arpeggio had lived the life of a parenthesis. He now enjoyed all the deference due to a principal clause. And this he liked.

Arpeggio jumped to his feet. His eyes glared fiercely at the two commissioners.

But the days became to him more and more terrible. Specifications for the new sewer; bids from six or seven steam-roller companies to do the work on a new piece of street; assessments to be levied by the board of review on which he was to sit; petty appointments to be made; the school board to keep down; minor claims to be adjusted—the crank to turn for the whole naked machinery of the little town.

"Ain't they no folks in this town?" he inquired one morning, three months after his election. "Is it all sewers and street-cleaning and taxes? Where's the folks? What's us commissioners for—the folks or their prope'ty?"

"It's the same thing, man," said Stack Mayhew pityingly.

"You lie," said Arpeggio, and went and drummed on the office window.

"It's a great trust," said Purcell Dodd, caressing his nose. "Somebody has to do the handlin' of the funds. Somebody——"

"Well," said Arpeggio, "I've got to go see about my strawberry-pickers now," and left them.

ARPEGGIO picked strawberries and groaned. So this was what it meant to be a commissioner. And all that he could see before him was the fight to keep out sewerage, and the fight to keep the town from owning the water-works. In both these he was expected to vote as Barney would have voted: against the sewer going in, depleting the treasury just when the street commissioners were ready to dip into it; and for the continued private ownership of the water, out of which Barney himself, by devious ways, was making a good thing. Barney, out on bail, used the other two commissioners as a man uses electric push-buttons. Stories of Arpeggio's lack of interest and his blunders were already circulating in Banning. Not even Barney's closest friends called them anything else, and Arpeggio was in no discoverable sympathy with the little town's reformers. But——

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Arpeggio went out to sit with his doves.

"He ain't easy broke in," Stack Mayhew admitted.

It was not that Arpgeggio refused to be led by the nose. He was merely stupid at receiving directions. On the day that the steam-roller bids were to be opened, they had to send some one after him. Arpeggio had been found at home, feeding his doves.

In spite of the fact that Barney's crowd suggested to him with explicitness which steam-roller bid would be the best, Arpeggio had been found at home feeding his doves.

"Tell 'em one's just as big a robber as another," he sent back word. "I'm neutral."

This story had particularly kindled the anger of the followers of Barney. They sent Stack Mayhew out to talk with him.

"Look-a-here," said Stack, "if you ain't got any sense of the great trust you've got, anyway get wise to your great chanct."

"Chanct to what?" inquired Arpeggio. That day he had a chip and a tin can and was picking off potato-bugs.

"To administer certain funds," said Stack.

Arpeggio touched bugs into his tin can. "I don't know how you mean that," said he. "But it sounds dirty to me, the way you put it."

"The man's a fool," Stack reported. "He's the biggest fool in Canandaigua County. It ain't that he's moral. He's just a fool. He don't know how to—to—to——"

"Sure he don't" they agreed.

When the census-taker got his appointment from the commissioners, Arpeggio slipped down in his chair and brooded over the golden-oak table. This man was going out to call on everybody in town, as he himself had done for twenty years. He himself had made a good many rounds, including the taking of the school census, and people knew him. "Well, here you are again," they said at half the houses. "I declare it don't seem as if it was four years, does it?" And he would talk over with them that it didn't seem four years. Then he would take the children's ages, and they would show him, on the cupboard or the pantry door, how much this one had grown since he was there before. And sometimes there would be the mark of a little head which could not be measured ever any more. But more often the cradle had been brought down from the attic once or twice in the interval, and he had to meet this new member of the family, and enter the new name, and be told from whom the child had both her names, and all about the two name-folk. Then there were the gardens to see—how they had grown in the meantime, how the fruit trees came on, how many changes and transplantings were to be accounted for. There were gardens which he never got to see except when he made the census. And now——

"Don't you think so, Shadd?" asked Stack Mayhew.

"Think what?" snapped Arpeggio.

"How we'd better make an ordinance against mosquitoes," drawled Stack, winking at Purcell. "They say here in town a good many of 'em would weigh a pound. A good many of 'em would weigh a pound," he repeated his joke impressively.

Arpeggio looked at him without seeing him.

"Come, come!" said Purcell impatiently. "He means, think there'd ought to be a four-inch conductor on the new eaves-trough for this building. The roof's pretty flat——"

Arpeggio jumped to his feet. His hair had a lock shaken in his eyes, and his eyes glared fiercely at the two commissioners.

"If you think I'm going to spend my life over such concerns," he shouted, "you think different from me. Settle it yourselves. I'm no plumber."

It was no wonder that the dissatisfaction began to be open. Not only Barney's crowd, but the whole of Banning, was looking on. Arpeggio would not attend to his business, it was persistently reported. And then he said such strange things. One night he had walked in on a dozen men about a free-lunch counter.

"You fellows," he said, "if you was going to ask the commissioner to do something for the folks of this town, what'd you ask 'em for?"

"A new crossing in front of my house!"

"T' fill in the hollow in my block!"

"T' pay me better for city teaming!"

"T' give me a job!"

Arpeggio stood looking at them.

"Why, you're as bad as the commissioners themselves," he said, and walked out.

"Mother," he said, "I'm goin' to resign. This commissioner business—it's a *business*. I kind of thought it was an office between the town and the people. I'm sick of it. My garden's going to pieces. Another man's taking my census and seeing my families. I'm goin' to resign."

His mother looked troubled.

"I don't know how these things go," she said; "but this town's full o' people. Seems queer that you an' them ain't as close as them and the census-taker."

"Nothing like," said Arpeggio with emphasis, and went out to sit with his doves.

AND as he sat there he heard a sound of sobbing. It came from the other side of the hedge which divided his garden from the Wanderers'. Arpeggio rose, a dove on his hand, stepped to the hedge and looked over.

There was Jess with her face in the long grass, her little body shaken by weeping. And as she wept she talked steadily, though not a word was articulate. Beside her sat Pete, comforting her and crying too. Arpeggio stroked his dove and stared at them. "What is't?" he said, almost timidly. He felt as if he ought not be looking.

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"Oh," said Peter, "*didn't* you know?" As if, of course if he had known, Arpeggio would be crying too. "The circus ain't comin' this year again."

"Go on, now!" said Arpeggio in real concern. He himself loved a circus. And then, too, he had a way of wanting everybody to have what they wanted.

"Oh, it ain't, it ain't, it ain't!" Jess wailed. "And I never saw a sea-l-l-lion in my l-l-life!"

"Tt, t-t," said Arpeggio, with tongue and teeth. "Dear me, now, dear me. Look here! Mebbe it's a mistake. Mebbe it *is* coming," he held out brightly.

"No, it ain't!" Peter refuted this hopelessly. "Papa said so. He read it in the paper. Last night."

"Well, sir, now," said Arpeggio weakly, "what a naughty circus." He was never sure how to talk to children, but he loved to try. He stroked the burnished feathers of the dove and looked down at it. If only he could get a circus to come to Banning for these kiddies.

"It *wanted* to come!" cried Peter. "They wouldn't let it come!"

Jess wailed afresh. "And I never saw a sea-l-l-lion in my l-l-life —."

Arpeggio had no time for her special tragedy. His ear had been caught by the acute fact.

"Who?" he demanded. "Who wouldn't let it come?"

Peter reflected. This was a poser. Who could have power like that, after all? "Papa said," recited Peter, "that the city was a close-fisted set of p-h-o-o-l-s. Was that who done it?" he inquired hopefully.

Arpeggio said nothing. He opened his hands, and the dove, nestling for a moment, flew free of him and flashed wings in the air. His eyes followed it, silver in the golden afternoon.

"We'll see about that," he said, over the hedge. "We'll just see. I'll report to you later," he added gravely. He walked about the garden, but he was not thinking of his plants. Already it was toward six o'clock. He must be patient until to-morrow. But to-morrow——

ARPEGGIO was waiting when the other commissioners entered their room. They met every morning from nine until ten. Arpeggio seldom honored them at this hour. He now cut short their open jests.

"What's this about a circus?" he demanded. "Has any circus applied to us for a license this year?"

Sure, they said—Zorner.

Now Zorner Brothers were the owners of one of the great circuses, and they were accustomed to winter in a town near Banning, but they seldom showed there. It was explained to Arpeggio that they were traveling west again through a neighboring state, and a town just across the border from Banning had set forward its county fair and wished to break its circus date. They had wired to Banning to offer the date forfeited.

"Well?" said Arpeggio. "Why not?"

"Sure *not*," said Stack Mayhew crisply.

"Bet your life *not*," agreed Purcell, with energy.

"Why not?" repeated Arpeggio. "The animals—the children—surely——"

Stack Mayhew shook his cigar on high.

"And have our new Main Street pavement all hacked to pieces by all them heavy wagons?" he demanded. "It'd cost us a thousand dollars to fill up the holes. Don't you remember ten years ago, when Zorner come here——"

"Gall o' bitterness!" said Arpeggio. "Leave 'em come, and leave us use the license money to fix the street."

Purcell Dodd laughed derisively.

"Like a house a-fire," he mocked. "'Twouldn't touch the damage. Anyhow, what's the use? We wired 'em nothin' doin'."

"You did!" said Arpeggio, quietly. "When did you?"

"Day before yist'd'y," Stack said.

"Where was I?" Arpeggio demanded.

Stack chuckled. "Plowin' the pompadour of your potatoes, likely," he hazarded. "Did they leave them drawbridge specifications, Dodd?" He took up the business of the day.

ARPEGGIO leaned forward and held their look.

"See here," he said, "about that there circus. You know, I got an *i*-dee——"

They waited frowning, already against it. These were men who did not require even to be familiar with an idea in order to oppose it.

"—an idee I could work somethin' there—somethin' that might make—a differ'nce."

Arpeggio brought about a wink, a long one, a slow one.

"Screw up the license on 'em?" Stack immediately apprehended, his thought traveling in its old groves. "Well, of course if you know some of 'em, rather'n lose the date you might get 'em to—the hull county would come, and they know it," Stack concluded. "They ain't showed here for ten years. Kin you do that, though?" he doubted.

"Well," said Arpeggio, "I ain't a-saying *what* I can do. I got an i-dee I can bring somep'n to bear."

Stack leaned over to Arpeggio.

"Look a-here, Shadd," he said, "we don't mind tellin' you that if you *could* do somep'n to—er—show your interest, it might come pretty handy for you just now. We don't mind tellin' you that Barney and the gang are pretty sore. They can spread stuff if they get a-goin'. And they're talkin'—" Stack drew down his brows and looked right and left—"they're talkin' *re*call."

Arpeggio was looking out the window. "Leave 'em to," he said, without withdrawing his eyes. "That'd spare me the trouble. I'm a-goin' to resign. I said so this mornin'."

"Resign!" said the men. It had never entered their thought to resign a salary.

"But first," said Arpeggio, "*first* I got a little somep'n I want to pull off."

He did not linger to go over the specifications for the new drawbridge. He went to the telegraph office, looked up the Zorners' telegram, and wired to the proper place in their itinerary. Was that date still open? Would they leave it open twelve hours, for a further message?

Then he dropped in a shop and made a purchase. Thereafter he took his way toward the schoolhouse. In the playground a crowd of children gathered on summer mornings, engaged in what the witting Banning observer was wont to call "hittin' the apperatus." Arpeggio could see them as he turned the corner. He walked under the trees to an old bandstand, and there busied himself with that purchase of his.

It was an alluring summer morning, with a sense of sun arrested in the air, permeating, transmuting. You breathed not air, but sunshine; and the children of Banning, who knew more about these things than anybody else, were answering the summons, idling out into the streets, dropping over to the playground for a high swing or a wild toboggan down a board. Presently Arpeggio walked over to them. Ten yards distant he suddenly burst into terrific speed, and landed among them with a swift turn which swung his coat-tails and arms in engaging fashion. The children, who all knew him, shouted and ran to him; Peter and Jess fought blindly for their rights.

"We're best door neighbors!" cried Jess. "You get away!"

Arpeggio, looking down at them felt all the wonder and abasement with which children always filled him. Felt, too, his proprietary rights. Had he not all but welcomed them into the world? He half forgot, in looking at them, that he had come with "a little somep'n to pull off."

"Who's cryin'?" he demanded suddenly.

They laughed, scenting a joke.

"What about the circus?" he pursued.

Their faces fell. Arpeggio, seeing their faces fall, knew his own determination to be absolute.

"Look-a-here," he said, and they were very quiet. "Look-a-here. I been a-wondering. I kind of think you can do something about that there circus. If you could, would you?"

Would they!

"Even if it took the hull afternoon?"

Would they!

"An' mebbe not do any good anyway," Arpeggio warned them.

No difference. They crowded about him. He took his purchase from his pocket. And when he explained to them his dream, it was as if he were explaining to each one—to those whom he had seen in cradles brought down between census-takings; to those whose middle names he knew; to those whose heads he had seen measured on cupboard doors.

ARPEGGIO went down the long, sleepy street: the wet bricks, the shadows of maple leaves, the moss on the rotten picket fences and on the shingles, the old delivery-wagon and white horse turning out of an alley; somebody hanging out a washing; somebody mending a screen; somebody whipping a rug. He looked at the gardens, this one with delicate tomato plants, this one with potatoes where there had been corn, this one with an experiment in celery-raising. He hung over a gate or two and talked.

And all the way, Arpeggio saw the streets of homes as he had been wont to visit them. He could almost recite from the census:

Brooks: Israel. Carpenter. (Annie L.)
—Annie, salesgirl.
—Miles, ticket-taker.
—Sadie.

And in the brown house next, with the false second-story end on the slant roof:

Carpenter: Giles, hides and pelts. (Martha.)
—Alois, bricklayer.

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—Bartholomew, clerk.
—Effie.
—Catherine.

Then he remembered that Catherine had died. He had seen her funeral pass, and had recalled her as that one whose chin had come just above the dining-room window-sill when last he was there.

He looked along the street and up and down the shady cross-streets. Something was warm in his breast. Homes, homes, homes—and he knew something of all of them. He felt a kindly interest in them all. He sighed. If only he need not have given up the census-taking!

As the twelve-o'clock whistle blew he turned into his own door-yard, just as his mother came to the door with one hand catching up the hem of her apron into its band, and the other hand shading her eyes.

"Dinner!" she called. "Baked potatoes and vegetables, oysters and custard pie."

Arpeggio cast down his hat on the porch and went in the house with her.

"Mother," he said, "you know, it's the funniest thing. The real life of this town ain't commissioned by nobody. Yep. I'm a-goin to *re*-sign."

AT FIVE o'clock that day Arpeggio sat in the commissioner's office. He had arrived at three. He had sat there while the city engineer explained why the drawbridge specifications were all wrong. At four, in response to his tip, the city editor of the Banning *Banner* had rolled in, had been told by Stack that there was no more news in there than there was cream on a cistern, and acting on a wink from Arpeggio, had stayed on. And at half-past four, the door of the commissioners' office was opened, and more than a hundred children walked in.

They bore twenty sheets of foolscap. These twenty sheets had from twenty to forty names each, all names of children, in round, in square, in sprawling, characters. And at the top of each page was set:

"We, the undersigned, want to know if you will please let the circus come."

They were very quiet. Really, Stack and Purcell made more noise than the children did. These two fumed, and cleared their throats, and shuffled their papers, and shoved back their chairs, and finally Stack pounded on the table.

"It's impossible, I tell you!" he shouted. "We've wired 'em 'no.' "

The legs of Arpeggio's chair struck the floor. "I wired 'em this morning to wait for another message from us," said he. "I thought you give me that understanding."

"Ten to one the date's gone anyhow!" shouted Purcell Dodd.

"Nope," said Arpeggio, and produced a telegram. This laconic message read: "Date still open. Wire quick."

"Did you put up the license on 'em?" Stack demanded.

"Not one penny," Arpeggio said.

"But we got our taxpayers to think of!" cried Stack. "That's just put their money into street improvements——"

Arpeggio turned to the children.

"How many of you asked your parents whether you could sign?"

Every lifted hand shot far out of its sleeve.

The city editor of the Banning *Banner* spoke up: "We go to press in fifteen minutes, gentlemen," he said. "Do I say 'Circus to come'? "

"I vote 'yes,' " said Arpeggio.

At this the children broke into a delicious shouting. "Yes, yes, yes!" they cried. And in the pause came the voice of little Jess Wanderer, on the front row, shaking her hair and jumping up and down: "I never saw a sea-l-l-lion in my l-l-life!"

The votes of the other two commissioners were inaudible. And they were sourly given. But the city editor dashed out to write his story. And when the children had gone, and the two looked about for Arpeggio, they discovered that he had gone too.

AS THE story became known, the disconcerting independence of it hastened the action of Barney's followers. This fellow must be got out of office before the "really important business of the administration" should come up; and this was to say, the water-works and sewerage matters. Papers were circulated, signers were found, and the whisper grew that Arpeggio was to be recalled. These whispers came to Arpeggio, and he abandoned all thought of resigning. But he pondered. Not on the measure of the recall, but this water-works and sewer anxiety of Barney's crowd. Did the people share in these prejudices of the commissioners, he wondered? Did his families agree? And why?

"If I was only taking census," he thought, "I could talk to 'em."

He fell to happening in their houses. Always with an apology, as that he remembered so-and-so when he was taking census, and how was it with all of them now? They knew him, and they expressed themselves to him: "The water-works proposition was a steal and had ought to be changed. This town had ought to have sewerage, same as other towns."

Banning was already flaming with red-and-orange circus posters when the date of the special election on Arpeggio's recall was announced. Arpeggio sat on the front steps that August morning, and picked up the twisted *Banner* from where it had been flung the night before, and read the announcement. Six months in office, and it had come to this. He looked out on the rich green of his garden. From seed-sowing to harvest, and he had made a mock of the office with which they had trusted him. He shrugged. "Trusted" him! He knew how he had been elected. But he knew too that his only service in the six months had been to achieve a circus for Banning. He thought somewhat wistfully that he should have liked to do something more. He should have liked to stay in to beat them at that water-works and sewerage proposition.

His eye ran down the Banning *Banner's* "Supper-Table Jottings."

"Matt Wister has installed a new drive well on his place."

(Arpeggio remembered him. "Wister, Matt. City teamster. (Ellen C.)—Alf, Bennie, Joe." But Joe had had his arm taken off in a gasoline wood-cutter after the last census, and had held himself under a foot of water rather than become a burden on the rest.)

"Andrew Mayer went to Rocky Run to-day on business of a social nature."

(Yes, old Andrew. Bachelor. And a joke every time the census-taker had found no parenthesis after his name.)

"Cal Bremer will have quite some crop of hay off the vacant lot in the rear of his barn this fall."

(Arpeggio smiled at mention of Cal. There must have been eleven or twelve dashes and first names below his own name—and that of his parenthesis—in the census.)

"I'd like to go to 'em same as if I was taking census, and get the whole list of 'em to work on that water-works and sewer business," Arpeggio's thought ran on.

Then he sat up stiffly, so that the pair of doves pecking in the grass at his feet lifted hurrying wings and were away. Why not? Why not get the whole list of 'em after it?

Arpeggio bought more foolscap. He wrote out his petitions. And one petition, in all its simplicity, prayed the city commissioners for a referendum vote on the purchase of the city water-works from the private company now operating; and one petition, in the same simplicity, prayed the commissioners for a vote to install a system of sewerage; and the third petition—which Arpeggio never would have thought of had it not been for Mr. Wanderer—prayed for a vote on the amendment of the city charter to increase the amount of the bonds which the city might issue.

"But ten per cent. of the voters nothing," said Arpeggio. "If I get a majority of the folks in this town to sign this, that'll be a vote, won't it?"

Early one morning he went forth. The anomaly of his position did not impress him. He was merely going to see his families in the old way. Banning is not large. It is vicious with rectangles, and has ten streets running each way. Arpeggio abandoned all thought of attending that week's meetings of the commissioners. If he was to be recalled, what was the use of boring himself to death any more? He walked down the wet bricks under the maple shade; from house to house he went, with his foolscap paper, and he answered their questions, and he made his issues clear.

AND as he went, he hummed softly. Ah, this was something like! Here he was, going into all these houses as if he were taking a census, and they were welcoming him, as in the old days! As a matter of fact, they did welcome him. They knew him. What was all this that they had heard about recalling Arpeggio? Nonsense! He was their friend. As for poor grandma, she was gone; did he remember the flower he had given her from his buttonhole? Oh, but he must come in the other room and see the new baby, asleep—and wasn't he like Arthur at that age? And here and there and again the children were called in to stand against marks penciled on the inside of cupboard doors. Sign a petition? Sure they would sign. They thought so too. He was not a week in making the canvas of the little town.

In due time, his proceedings came to the ears of Stack and Purcell.

"Name o' liberty!" said Stack. "What's he doin' now? Round petitionin' himself!"

" 'Tain't legal," Purcell opined positively.

Legal enough for them to work hand and glove with Barney. Illegal for a commissioner to circulate a petition. But what if it were illegal? There would be the names, there would be the aroused sentiment. Stack and Purcell looked at each

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other across the golden-oak table and swore.

The day before the vote on Arpeggio's recall was the great, the triumphant day of Zorner Brothers' circus in Banning. Arpeggio was up as early as the children. He took Jess and Peter over to the side-track at five o'clock to watch the circus unload. He was back for breakfast like a boy, and came driving in an old phaeton to carry his mother off to see the parade. He stood up in this phaeton with an arm about her waist, and laughed and pointed. He bought a balloon. He drove home with Jess and Peter hanging over the dash-board. And with Jess and Peter he started off at one o'clock for the performance. Already he had dropped in the post-office his petitions to the commissioners.

These three arrived at the circus grounds just as the majority of the five thousand who attended from the county were all trying at once to push their way through the entrance to the big tent.

Arpeggio lifted Jess on his shoulder, gave a hand to Peter, and abandoned himself to intense enjoyment. Folks, folks! How he loved 'em!

They trod on his feet, and when they tried to apologize, he beamed on them. "Don't you give a hang!" said Arpeggio. They tipped his hat over his eyes. "That's all right. I no business to 'a' wore one;" he adjusted that. They climbed up his back. "Come on," said he; "what I got a big back *for?*" His balloon went off like a gun, and his laughter mounted. "*Now,*" he cried, "I can have a red one. I dunno what I wanted of that old blue one, anyway." His face was red and beaded. "I got only one anxiety," said he, "that's the peanuts'll be all et."

THE three sat in reserved seats and partook of peanuts and poisonous-looking lemonade, and bought fans. They laughed uproariously, and clowns singled them out for special performances and hand-kissing. When the trained seals appeared, Jess was in ecstasy—in articulate and prominent ecstasy. At last, with the arrival of the elephants, the three sank into supreme and silent delight, and basked.

Arpeggio looked about him. Rows of folks, tiers of folks, banks of folks. Folks from all over the county. He liked to look at them. He forgot the elephants, forgot the acrobats. Abruptly he was shot through by a sudden new sense of them: they all had the census taken at their houses, too. He saw them with new eyes. After the name of each of the men, a trade (and a parenthesis). Below the names of most, one or more blanks, and the first name of a boy or girl. His look deepened. And in every house a cradle, occasionally brought down from the attic; and in every house marks on the inside of the cupboard door.

"Gee!" said Arpeggio.

A purple lady slid from the remote top of the tent to the ground, sustained by her teeth and, apparently, her purple parasol. Arpeggio did not notice her.

Folks, folks! How he loved 'em!

What a lot of names they would make on a petition!

And here they were in this tent because he, Arpeggio, had connected up the names of some of them with a petition. He glowed to remember. And maybe Banning was going to have cleanliness and honest water-works because he had connected up some more of their names with the commissioners' office. He was smitten with a curious idea. Suppose the commissioners' office was nearer to those folks than they thought? Nearer even than the census-taker had been?

Some vague, bright comprehension shone upon him. Here he had been for six months in office, and had never even guessed it. And to-morrow they were going to vote him out of office. His trouble came back upon him—came, for the first time, as real trouble. As a chance forever missed.

"Wouldn't it?" said Jess, in the manner of one who has said a thing for the seventeenth time.

"Wouldn't what?" asked Arpeggio.

"Wouldn't it be nice if we'd made a mistake and it was only just beginning?"

"Yes," said Arpeggio, and sighed. "Yes, Jess, it would be nice, sure enough." But he wasn't thinking of the circus.

THE next day he rose early, and sat for a long time in his garden with his doves. His mother had everything that he liked for breakfast, and this touched him so that he nearly wept.

"That's the way she used to do when I didn't pass in arithmetic," he thought. And that, he remembered, was every little while.

As soon as the polls were open, Arpeggio went down and voted "yes" on his own recall.

"I've been a bum commissioner," he said, "and now I know it."

Then he went home, and drove the first stakes for his arbor. Through the day he worked but little. He sat for long intervals with the hammer in his hand. It grew dark, and then late, and he knew that his mother was still sitting on the porch. He could hear his doves, and they made him immeasurably homesick, as for something that he would never see again.

At eleven o'clock, as before, there came an automobile to his gate. He rose stiffly and went down the path. Stack Mayhew's voice came out of the dark.

"I s'pose you've heard, Shadd?"

"No," said Arpeggio, "but I know."

"Oh, *do* you?" said Stack. "Well, they was six hundred and twenty votes casted altogether, and one hundred and sixty-eight of them put you out, and four hundred and fifty-two of 'em lef' you in."

"What?" said Arpeggio, very low. "What, Stack?"

"And so," Purcell Dodd took up the interval, "Stack and me thought as long as the mee-jority was for you, him an' me wasn't goin' to grouch none."

Arpeggio turned a long breath, and turned his head.

"Hear, mother?" he called, over his shoulder.

A porch board squeaked as she rocked.

"I knew how 't'd be," she answered calmly.

"As for them petitions o' yours," Stack went on, "you'd done the business, though you'd ought to be in jail for it, and mebbe you will be. And we're goin' to fight you on the hull business. But it'll be up to us to call an election, all right, to vote on them two propositions. You seemin'ly not knowin', by the line-up o' names you run in, 't you only had to get ten per cent. of the voters to force an election." His high-pitched voice rose and cracked, and with it cracked his self-control.

"Arpeggio Shadd!" he shouted. "You're the biggest fool in Canandaigua County!"

It was then that Arpeggio, bursting into happy laughter, made his famous reply which Banning still goes quoting:

"I bet I ain't," said he.

KATHARINE NEWLIN BURT, author of "The Branding Iron," so enthusiastically received in book form after its serial appearance in Everybody's, begins in the April issue a new story of the Far West, "Hidden Creek." The heroine is a delicately bred Eastern girl, transplanted to the life of Wyoming ranches and a frontier town harboring the most extraordinary bar-room in literature—"The Aura." In "Hidden Creek" the creator of *Joan,* of *Pierre,* and of *Prosper Gael* introduces equally fascinating characters who live a succession of thrilling adventures in the wilds of a rugged country that the author knows intimately.

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A Byway of Danby

By Francis Willing Wharton

I

ALONG the main street of Danby Center where it had taken a turn away from the sordid practicality of the lower town, and where stood the honored mansions of its old aristocracy—along this highway of respectability the trees were leafy, for it was May's end. The lilacs were out in the gardens in front of the well-to-do gray-and-white frame houses, varied by an occasional more pretentious brick edifice, that faced each other across the wide street; and sprays of forsythia overladen with their golden cups arched across the freshly dug beds.

There had come one of those hot waves that rush the spring into summer in New England, and the air was still and heavy at five o'clock in the afternoon. Most people in the sleepy old place were taking refuge in darkened drawing-rooms with tall glasses of lemonade or tea before them, and but one solitary figure sauntered under the shade of the elms, braving the heat with the courage born of youth and a restless mind.

The few score families that constituted Danby Center's upper society looked on Miss Marian Reeves with tolerant disfavor; with tolerance because any one you have seen grow up from babyhood to young womanhood, whose family are all that can be desired of conventional respectability and established position, is to be borne with, unless her vagaries approach open wickedness; with disfavor, because of her undue interest in the society of men and her taste for solitary rambling. The people of Danby Center did not wander miles over hill and dale without object. They walked to a place and from a place, or, if they did saunter through the fields, they dignified it by botanizing—that is always respectable. Marian, returning with bright eyes and empty hands, had nothing but torn skirts to show for her wanderings.

With all their disapproval, they would have missed her sadly had they had to do without her, for she created many of their small excitements, and of her appearance they were uneasily proud.

She wore a lilac muslin as she loitered through the heat on this May afternoon, which Miss Lavinia Morse, looking through a chink in the parlor blinds, pronounced a sinful waste on a week-day. But then Marian made her own gowns, and there again the good ladies felt checked in their criticism.

It was hot! Her wide white hat and ample sunshade could not protect her from the searching rays of the sun. She must take refuge somewhere—whom should she visit? The Lawtons would give her delicious tea and thin bread and butter—but she would die of boredom. The Caseys would be worshiping the Reverend Mr. Purvis—she did not feel like upsetting their peaceful party. The Birds would take hours to come down. The Thompsons were getting ready for their dance tonight—poor things! Think of dressing-rooms with green boughs with the thermometer at eighty-five! The Becks—by all means the Becks.

She had a vision of their great, cool, still drawing-room, clad in faded chintz covers, with the portrait of Grandfather Speedwell smiling subtly down upon her. She did not care how long Lucy kept her waiting while she had Grandfather Speedwell's blue eyes and debonair curved lips to look at. Perhaps Henry Beck would be visible—probably not. He kept his sarcastic presence out of the way of his sister's guests on his short visits to his family. But the Becks it should be, and Marian gathered up her lilac skirts and mounted the steps to the porch and rang the bell.

MISS LUCY was about to come down, the maid said, and Marian entered into possession of the cool still depths of the drawing-room and had it to herself, it seemed—alone with Grandfather Speedwell. She made her way through the chairs and tables to where the portrait hung over the mantelpiece and gazed her fill at the charming countenance. The girl's firmly marked brows drew together.

"Why did I ever forget my first love," she murmured, just loud enough for the words to be audible in the window-seat where the curtains sheltered Henry Beck, lying on his back on the cushions reading.

He put down his book softly, and parting the curtains that made an alcove of the bay window, observed the young lady.

She stood quite still, leaning against a heavy old chair on which her arm rested, and gazed with a depth of seriousness at the portrait before her. Beck had seen her often during her childhood; then more infrequently, on his rare visits to Danby; but it was perhaps two years since he had done more than pass Miss Reeves on the street, or admire her abundant light-brown hair and fine complexion as she turned her profile to him in church. He had not believed that any one could grow up in Danby Center—really arrive at maturity. Grow old—they did that fast enough; never having ripened, they withered the more rapidly. But this was a live, vigorous creature, talking of love, and to a portrait, too. She must have imagination!

"Miss Reeves—" Henry Beck stood in the parted curtains, smiling with the delicate irony that on Grandfather Speedwell's lips was brightened by gaiety, and softened by full-lipped love of life. "Miss Reeves, I am dying to hear more, but I feel dishonest hidden behind the curtain. So you love Philip Speedwell? As a boy he was my ideal, but he led me into much trouble. He will tell you that pleasure is to be plucked like ripe fruit! Don't believe him."

He shook his head admonishingly, and advancing, stood before her; his fingers in the leaves of his book, keeping his place—he could not believe he would want to stay more than a moment.

Marian looked at him with the direct gaze of her widely set hazel eyes.

"Now that you mention it, I believe you are right. Your Grandfather Speedwell's influence has not been of the best, but I never thought before of bringing home to him certain evil tendencies he undoubtedly nurtured in me," she said, turning her eyes to the portrait. "I suppose I ought to reproach him, but I don't intend to."

Beck shook his head, smiling as he made close scrutiny of her face. "You still believe in him," he said, "and Danby is just the place to cherish illusions; no real events happen to shatter them. I had to get away—to live in a city before I met reality."

Miss Reeves turned from him, and choosing a large, old-fashioned wicker chair, established herself in it.

"I was more ingenious than you were," she returned gravely, looking up at him. "I made my bricks without straw."

Henry Beck stood staring down at her, trying to take in all that her speech implied, and to deal with the impression of her personality at the same time, and he was still floundering in a state of very happy mental confusion when he heard the clack-clack of Lucy's slippers on the stairs. He slid down into a seat, realizing that if he were standing, Lucy would expect him to follow his usual course and civilly retire. If he were sitting down, his remaining might be laziness, or only a trifle of added politeness—anything that would not rivet Lucy's keen little eyes on him.

A SWISH of silk petticoats and Lucy stood gazing on the couple before her. She came forward almost instantly, with just the fractional second of delay that conveyed her surprise at finding her brother, and then, touching Marian's fingers, made good her rather regal position on a huge sofa, with a silver tray and its glasses and pitchers before her. Tea was a ceremony with Lucy, and by the time Marian had been asked ten well-worn questions about her family, her health, her gown for the dance, and the amount of sugar she wanted in her tea, Henry Beck felt himself thoroughly established again in Danby Center, and wondered if he had dreamed Grandfather Speedwell and made up Marian.

His eyes wandered to the picture—it was there, then back to the girl—she was there also, and with something in her aspect that reassured him. Other Danbyites might have that hot pink flush of youth on their cheeks at twenty, but they did not have those wide-apart daring eyes and that resolute pleasure-loving curl to their lips.

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Beck drew an inward breath of satisfaction—she was real.

Lucy had at last got past tea and lemon, ice and sugar, and drawing her little lace handkerchief through her hands, she settled herself to extract a few facts from Marian. It was her idea of having a good time, and she wished Henry would go, though it looked well to have a man in the room, if any one came in. She thought men essential as ornaments, otherwise she only liked them when they were personally devoted to herself; there had been several of this kind, to her brother's honest and everlasting wonder.

"Marian—" Miss Beck was noting the slippers on her guest's feet and the openwork stockings— "do you know what a scandal you have created by calling Mr. Purvis captain?"

Beck laughed.

"Don't encourage her, Henry," she went on. "Marian is filled with queer ideas, and not the least is this calling a clergyman captain, because she says he looks like a dragoon.

"She spends whole days alone in the woods," continued Lucy, "and she wears evening slippers to run about the streets. I suppose she will come to-night in a sweater and thick-soled boots."

Marian rose, smiling. "My dear Lucy, all my vagaries have some meaning. Didn't you know it? The costume you suggest wouldn't be a happy thought to-night. Good-by. I see the Reverend Mr. Purvis approaching and must fly, lest I offend your pious ears. Good-by."

She blew a kiss to Lucy and, with a nod to Beck, turned to the hall. Beck followed her, and standing there, hesitated a moment.

"May I walk home with you?" he asked.

She raised her eyebrows with a smile. "You, with me? Why, yes—why not?"

He took his hat and opened the door. They faced a young man who stood mopping his florid countenance with a handkerchief.

"Miss Reeves—" the newcomer shook hands hastily with Beck, at the same time detaining the young lady with— "Don't forget you are engaged to me for three dances to-night."

"Three, Captain?" The girl shook her head. "I didn't really say three, did I?"

"Upon my word, you did," he maintained eagerly.

With a shrug of her shoulders she looked up at him. "Oh, very well," she said, smiling, "three be it; and after all, I sha'n't regret it. You dance wonderfully," and, turning, she descended the steps with Beck beside her.

"An odd tribute to a minister," he grumbled, with an ill-used feeling that Purvis was stealing somebody's thunder.

The girl stopped and smiled straight up into his eyes. "So you were born in Danby, after all," she said; and they laughed together.

II

THE Reeves home stood on a lane that opened out of the more pretentious main street and, as one followed it, passed between houses stationed widely apart, then among farms, and so to the river whose stream flowed fresh and unpolluted, before it took a turn again half a mile below into Danby town with its mills and sophistication.

Beck had often loitered out that way in his boyhood and early manhood, a gun or a rod over his shoulder, and the old, faded, gray frame dwelling before whose gate he and Marian now stopped, was a very familiar object.

"Won't you come in?" asked the girl, opening the gate.

He assented without hesitation, and she led the way to the lawn at the side of the house.

"Don't let us go inside," she said as she sauntered along, looking about with the contented eyes of a person who really loves her home. "I will show you the garden, and though it would not photograph to advantage for a horticultural magazine, I love it."

It was not far to seek—the whole place was only a few acres, but a discreet use of hedges and stone walls had done much to increase the apparent size of the domain, and when they had passed beyond some high walls of arbor-vitæ, Beck felt a thrill of gratitude to the original Reeves.

"He must have known something about the needs of human nature, your great-grandfather," he began; "it was he who built the house and laid out the garden, wasn't it?" They walked slowly on through the low box hedges as he talked. "How private, how sheltered it is, and with a curious elusive poetry about it, too."

"Do you feel it?" said the girl, turning to him. "I am so glad. Aunt Posey thinks it merely shabby and lacking in the scarlet sage and geranium borders that she believes in. The whole thing suits me, from the sunken rose bed to that little brick terrace, where there is a long bench." She led the way to two old broken stone steps. Mounting, they reached a little terrace looking down on the garden and facing toward the woods and fields, with a couple of big elms that shaded it from the sun, and a wide wooden seat supported by two stone blocks.

"I often bring cushions out here at night and lie in the quiet of it; you see the seat is wide enough not to fall off." She laughed and Beck seated himself at one end as she took the other.

He looked out over the garden, bathed in the still sunshine, and drew a deep breath of the warm spring air.

"How beautiful this place is, so calm and peaceful. It represents just the sort of thing I was most afraid of when I was growing up. At twenty I determined to fight my way in the city. It has been a mighty hard job, but I've never regretted breaking away from the restraints, the petty triumphs, the belittling observances, of life in a small town."

Self-confession was so unique an indulgence for Beck, in the atmosphere of

She wore a lilac muslin, which Miss Lavinia Morse, looking through a chink in the parlor blinds, pronounced a sinful waste on a week-day.

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Danby at any rate, that the girl studied with wonder the stern profile turned toward her. Then, clasping her hands over her knee, she too looked over the garden toward the deepening colors of the sky.

"One need not be belittled by a small town, and some people are crushed by a city," she said in her deliberate accents, and Beck came back from his own thoughts to watch her as she spoke. "There is plenty of work to do in Danby. Do you know a man named Boyer?"

Beck nodded. "Yes, he is one of the town council, isn't he, with an eye to being mayor later on?" His tone was not enthusiastic, and she turned on him with something in her smiling lip and eye that cut a little.

"I hope he will be mayor," she said, "but if by that you mean he is working from interested motives, you misjudge him as cruelly as Aunt Posey does."

THEIR eyes met in a sort of clash. "Really!" Beck smiled. "May I ask where you get your inside information?"

"Oh—I—" she shrugged her shoulders—"I am a free lance in Danby; I have many queer friends. I had occasion to go to Mr. Boyer's office to ask his help about something, and found myself talking to one of the finest specimens of my race I've ever met. We occasionally blend the knight errant with the business man in this country, you know."

Beck's eyes flashed somberly. "Do we?" he returned a trifle savagely. "Wish you would show me an example. I am sorry, Miss Reeves, but I don't believe in your village Milton."

They faced each other like two fencers on guard.

"I don't suppose you do," answered the girl, "but then, my dear Mr. Beck, how many things do you believe in?" Her voice was as coolly satiric as his own might have been, and Beck paid her the unusual tribute of a slight accession of color. He drew a little nearer in his earnestness.

"I am not credulous—" he began, his usual tone infused with a rare seriousness; but she interrupted him.

"Not credulous," she repeated and laughed. "No, how well one knows that. Men like you tempt the weak to lie from fear, and the strong to lie to spite you! Living in an atmosphere of little faith, how can you expect people to confide their miracles to you—but they perform them just the same." Her face glowed and Beck felt the world change its colors in the deepening light of her eyes. He leaned toward her and smiled with sudden gentleness. Gazing at him with wide, observant eyes she, as instantly as he had recognized her inner nature, knew his—the wasted sweetness of it flooded her, and she sat still, looking into the eyes that smiled upon her. Beck spoke.

"Am I like that?" he said. "Am I like that? I know I was not born the man you describe, nor can I claim the excuse of a bad up-bringing."

He stared away to where the pink-and-yellow flushes began to suffuse the sky.

The girl remained silent. Beck turned to meet her eyes filled with an eagerness that had not lain in them before. "Part of what you accuse me is true," he went on, "but not all of it, and one thing, fair judge, you must believe on my bare word—" he hesitated.

"I would believe anything on your bare word," she said, leaning a little toward him, and Beck felt his heart beat lighter.

"Thank you," he answered. "It is that I have never believed less in the value of ideals because I have been unlucky enough to find few people to stand by them."

They looked at each other. "I have not a doubt of it," she said deliberately, and he held out his hand.

"And believe also this, that when I make one of my rare friends, I never lose him. I wonder if you might not be one of them?" he said. As she dropped her eyes from the delicate strength of his face to the delicate strength of his hand, she knew suddenly the charm that lies in an exquisite and unflinching rectitude. She raised her hand and laid it lightly in his.

"I won't hold you to your word," she said, her face touched with a lovely reflection of the sunset. "I should have to ease my soul of so many confessions before I felt free to claim your friendship, for I too—" she drew her hand away—"I too am a worshiper of truth and believe in facing realities." She rose as she spoke. "Do you know that light means sunset, and therefore high time for you to be going home to dress for dinner, and I should do the same? I'll go with you to the gate."

As she led the way Beck followed her, a dozen sentences contending on his lips; but abandoning them all as they reached the entrance, he merely held out his hand and said: "Till to-night. How many dances are you going to give me?"

She raised her eyebrows. "To-night! Will you be there? Mrs. Thompson will be overwhelmed. But if you are in earnest, you shall be liberally treated.

"I shall count on you, then," returned the young man and, raising his hat, he walked away.

HENRY BECK stood in Mrs. Thompson's presence with an aspect of unusual geniality. On his rare appearances at Danby parties he produced an alarmed flutter, as his hostess met his gently ironic eye, but to-night he seemed, as Mrs. Thompson remarked with inward congratulation, quite like other people. His unexpected bonhomie, however, did not hamper his very definite intentions, and having freed himself from Mrs. Thompson and her attendant satellites, he wandered about in systematic search for the one person he meant to see anything of during the evening. He found her in the dancing-room explaining kindly, but firmly, to a very young Thompson that two yards of her dress was as much as any one partner had a right to cost her.

Beck, standing before her, offered her his arm. "Isn't this to be one of my three?" he said.

She took his arm, and as he led her out of the ballroom, tried to catch up her mangled skirt. "No," she answered. "This, when it begins—" the music had just stopped—"is to be the first of Captain Purvis's. I give three in a clump. I like it better that way. One really knows to whom one is talking by the second dance."

"I am glad you said 'To whom one is talking,' for I can't dance," remarked Beck.

"I didn't suppose you could," she replied. "Isn't the moon heavenly? Do you want your three after the Captain's?"

Beck nodded and, leaning against a slender pillar on the porch, loooked down on his companion, as she half sat, half leaned on the railing.

"You look very like Grandfather Speedwell to-night, with your white cravat," she said, "but even to-night you have none of his gay invulnerability. Your eyes look as though you could suffer if you had the chance, and he is beyond the reach of all that."

Beck shrugged his shoulders. "I have always believed him lacking in a heart," he said; "people conveniently without that article naturally do not suffer, for they can not feel."

The girl shook her head. "You are all wrong," she said. "He made up his mind early, as I have done, never to regret, to cast aside his mistakes, and profit by the lesson—but never to regret. When I am thirty-five—I suppose he was thirty-five when that was painted—I shall have that imperturbable look in my eyes, but it will not be because I have not felt."

"Oh, indeed," returned Beck, smiling as he considered her. "You have spoken several times as one not without experiences. What black ashes are you rising from? What mistakes are you taking with such philosophy? Did you forget to go to church, or only come out before the sermon? Did you cut Lucy out with Purvis, or flirt with young Thompson?"

The girl looked at him gravely. "At times you show singular ignorance of human nature," she said, "though you have lived in a big city for years. I wonder if even there you committed any follies. I should like to believe it."

"Should you?" returned Beck rather grimly. "Then I give you full permission." He hesitated, then added, with one of those new impulses he had felt that afternoon: "I have some weeks to remember of such folly that it changed my whole outlook on life. Since then I believe that any one might do anything, and though I do not judge people as harshly as you think I do, I prefer people without such experience as companions."

"People without temptations," returned Miss Reeves. "I don't agree with you. There is much more spontaneous rejoicing in me over the sinner that repenteth than over a spotless creature that has done nothing to be sorry for. Repentance, however, I do believe in; profiting by one's follies, not repining over them. I shall do my share of repenting; I have begun already."

BEFORE Beck could answer Purvis appeared, and Miss Reeves laid her hand on his arm, and looking back at the other man over her shoulder, smiled. "Count carefully," she said. "Don't go off with Miss Brown and skip a dance. At the third from this, look for me in the ballroom."

Beck returned rather a weary smile. "My dear young lady," he said, as he followed them, "Danby is not so filled with attractions as you seem to think. Make your dances short, I beg of you."

A moment later she was gliding off with Purvis, both of them so conspicuously wrapped in the pleasure of the music and rhythm that Beck heard the low rumble of Danbyan disapproval sounding throughout the room.

Purvis got his share of criticism, and Beck was amused to find himself agreeing with two old ladies in front of him that spiritual

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Miss Reeves, looking back at the other man, smiled. "Count carefully," she said. "At the third dance from this, look for me in the ballroom."

heights were not to be attained through the medium of a dance, and such a dance!

He watched them with a kind of fascination till the end of it, making the grim inward comment that it was always interesting to see anything done to its limit, and then wandered moodily off through the rooms.

The front piazza of the house seeming more or less deserted, he sought the steps there and, lighting a cigaret, leaned idly in the shadow of a pillar and watched a tall, well-built man, dressed in tweeds that suited ill with the party, approach the house, and, whistling to a servant who went by, give him a note with some quite positive added directions. He saw the light shine on some persuasive silver as it passed from one hand to the other, and then the stranger turned and walked off to the road again, where he disappeared.

The proceeding seemed very out of keeping with Danby's traditions, but Beck had forgotten it by the time he had smoked through a two-step and a waltz, and making his way round by the piazza, found the doorway in which he had last parted from Miss Reeves. He met a stream of outgoing young people as he came in, and after one glance around the half-empty ballroom found the couple he sought on the piazza at its farther end under the light of a rose-colored lamp. She was twisting a note in her fingers, and as Beck approached she pointed with it to the ballroom and looked into Purvis's eyes.

"Back to your flock, Captain," she said, smiling a little, and after some parley he left them. It was then that Beck noticed, though her eyes shone brightly, that her color had dropped to a handsome pallor.

"You are tired, overdanced," he said, standing near her and looking gravely into her eyes. "Sit down here and take things more quietly for a while."

She shook her head. "I can not," she answered. "May I have your permission to read this note? It might need an answer." She opened her note, read it, and folding it up, put it into its envelope and crushed it tightly in her hand. "On the whole, if you will get me a chair, I think I will sit down," she said.

Beck got two chairs, and as they sat together she leaned her arm on the rail of the piazza and shaded her face with her slender fingers. There was silence a moment; then she spoke, and Beck felt that he had known that she would say something like the words he heard ever since he saw the note in her hand.

"I wonder," she said, "if you are really what you seem, or only a good imitation of a man who might be one's friend."

He considered her and spoke lightly. "One's friend," he repeated. "Whose? That is the point. I might be some one's, but yours—I have changed my mind since this afternoon. I don't see myself in that rôle."

"Don't you—?" she dropped her hand and faced him, rather eagerly. "Don't you? Why not?"

Beck laughed, a delightful laugh, with mirth and leisure and something else in it, too, something that gave her a satisfaction that came to her in its fulness hours after.

"My reasons are not many, but they are powerful," he returned. "However, consider for a moment that they do not exist. If I could be a friend, what use would you put me to—for that was what you meant, wasn't it?"

She looked at him. "Yes, I suppose I did mean that," she answered. "I want a friend at this moment, an impossible friend, capable of being silent and yet there like a rock to which one holds; a passive mass of strength, behind which one can take refuge when one will, but which never advances and interposes itself between you and your opportunities for good or evil."

Beck again laughed, but with a difference, the mirth quite gone. "My dear Miss Reeves," he said, "you describe an inanimate object, but unfortunately not a man."

She put out her hand and laid it lightly on his arm. "Wait," she said. "Have you patience? I describe a man, the man you are, but only after your confidence has been fully attained. If you liked me enough, if you believed in me, you would give me such friendship as that in return for the deep confidence I should give you. Try to think if you can perform something out of the common in human intercourse, one of those miracles I spoke of—know me, understand me, in a day, instead of taking a year to do it, and trust me. Once really believe that I am honest, as I am, and the confession I would like to make to you will surprise you and give you pain, but can not affect your underlying respect and friendship for me."

She stopped, and sitting quite still with her hands clasped in her lap, she looked straight at him, with the undaunted expression peculiar to her eyes.

Beck drew in a deep breath of the warm summer air, and leaning back in his chair, stared at her with eyes whose sparkle expressed the tingle that ran through him.

"Give me a moment," he said. "I see I am limited to that, if I am to accomplish my miracle, but a moment I might have. Let us understand fully; you are capable of being as explicit as the dictionary. Now—

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how is it—I am bound over to regard you without criticism, no matter what you tell me—and that might be done in the glamour of ——"

She interrupted him. "Don't. You are wasting such precious time. It isn't glamour that makes me believe you a very strong, a very loyal person, whose philosophy is wise, whose sympathies—no, not sympathies—but whose judgments would be above and beyond the conventional. It isn't glamour—it's instinct. What is your instinct about me? If it is in my favor, obey it."

He fired slowly; she could almost see the smoldering of the heat, then the flame break out.

"Very well," he said. "My instincts are every one in your favor, so that is settled; but one point remains. After you have confessed, you do not want absolution. You've told me that plainly. It is not part of your religion. What, then, is it that you want?"

She clasped her hands about her knees and leaned toward him a little and smiled. It was the first touch of anything really appealing he had seen in her, and it touched him.

"I want help," she said.

Beck felt a warmth about his heart that he had forgotten could exist. "You shall have it," he said.

She looked at him, and the sense of her gratitude was so strong that he could not believe she had not spoken. "Go on," he added, and waited with a sort of concentrated attention that in itself was an instalment of the support she desired.

"To begin," said Miss Reeves slowly, "there is a man whom I must see to-night. He is waiting for me now in the wood back of our house, and he expects me to come, and I want you to come with me, and wait near by, while I speak to him. Does this seem impossible? Because, if it does—let us go no farther."

She looked at him, and her evident confidence that her avowal would not cause him to shrink from his undertaking gave him a rare satisfaction, even amid the mental disturbance her words caused him.

"It seems difficult, but not impossible," returned Beck deliberately. "Now go back and give me the key to this strange situation."

"I shall have to go back three years," she said; "that's a long time, isn't it? Three years ago a man came here to design the little schoolhouse and the other building Miss Dempster was putting up, in memory of her sister, you remember. He was a very attractive young man, from a primitive point of view, and being very young, and without other occupation, I fell in love with him. He was married." She paused and looked into Beck's impassive, listening eyes, and went on. "I knew he was married from the first. He was not happy with his wife, who remained behind in the city from which he came, but it did not affect my feeling. It did not occur to me for a long while that he would know how I felt, and I was ungoverned and idle. The situation altered when he fell in love with me—and told me so; that was two years ago. I kept it all in the region of romance in which I comfortably and childishly sojourned for a long while—but as his feeling grew more real, I cared less about him; but a mixture of loyalty and deviltry made me hold on. A year ago there were only ashes to answer his serious proposition that I should run away with him, and though I hated to show him my emptiness, I broke with him. Six months ago he had trouble about money and he is going to make a new start in New Zealand, where he has some relations and friends. He has come to say good-by to me, and I want to say good-by to him, but I would rather not go alone. So that is why I ask you if you will come with me and wait in the trees; and if he asks more of me than I can give him, I shall have you to protect me."

Beck's face expressed a kind of disdain, not difficult to read. "The man, then, is a blackguard," he said slowly, "since you need protection."

She laid her hand on the railing as though to steady herself. "Do you need further explanation," she said in a voice that shook a little, "or will you come without? I hope you will come without."

Beck stared straight into wide-apart eyes which met his, clear and unfaltering. "I will come without," he said with an effort, and set his teeth.

She rose, and as he stood beside her, laid her hand on his arm. "Thank you," she said. "Now the way and the means are these, simple enough. Go and say good-by to your hostess, and meet me at our gate. I will make an excuse to go home also, and will meet you and guide you to the place. For your thanks——"

"Never mind my thanks," interrupted Beck shortly. "Let us get through this before we think of them. It is not a mission of pleasure. Let me ask you one question—you feel you owe this man such a good-by?"

Her color mounted to the hot pink glow he had admired that afternoon. "I was so profuse in my protestations of affection in the early days," she said slowly, "that the remembrance of them whips and spurs me to it. I owe him this in his trouble. I

(*Continued on page 122*)

His words began to come to Beck's ears. Tender, desperate words, pleading with her to remember old days—days he had not known since those early times, when she loved him.

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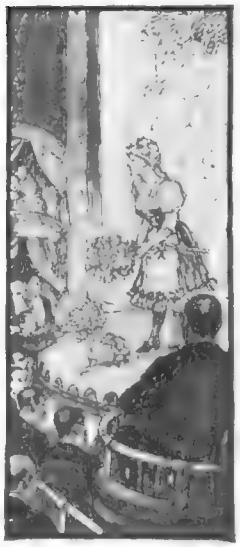

The succession of her admirers bewildered New York

Fair Daughter of a Fairer Mother

By Harrison Rhodes

THE old graveyard at Tomocala is neglected now. The road beyond it dies away into a sandy trail across the flat woods. There is to-day a new, almost garish cemetery on higher, dryer ground, with ugly concrete work and a few hideous memorials. John Branster, who had a little farm and orange-grove lying next the older ground, and did the little stone-cutting that was needed for the occasional gravestones of those early days, is dead and almost forgotten to-day in Tomocala. The story there is to tell here is some of it dim, ancient history on the Floridian east coast now, ancient history in New York too, where there may perhaps be a few very old men in the clubs who remember that when they were twenty and gay blades they sent bouquets to the stage door of Niblo's for Hortense Stevens.

The old graveyard is overgrown with green; a few wild orange-trees fill it with heavy perfume when spring comes, and through the summer red hibiscus flowers gleam here and there in the tangled leafy hedge that hides it from the lonely Creek Road. In New York the Garden that was Niblo's has gone forever; the memory of its lights, its music, and its proud beauties lives only in hearts for the most part as lonely now as the road at Tomocala, which wanders away as if in discouragement into the solitude of the pines.

Few people either in Tomocala or in New York to-day know or remember that the beautiful Hortense Stevens, the darling of London and Paris and of our great town as well, lies in this obscure green corner where the mocking-birds by day and the whippoorwills by night are the only watchers by her grave. There is a little low headstone which John Branster cut from the gray shell rock. It had never more than just the letters H. S. upon it. These are now half obliterated in the soft stone, which too has grown green and mossy. Since John Branster died wild seeds and wild flowers have overrun the lot where she lies. The gardenias and camellias that he planted have died for lack of care or been throttled by the invading plants that in Florida so quickly obliterate the work of man.

Both these flowers she used to wear; in wreaths upon her golden hair and bouquets upon her lovely breast they used to die nightly in the heat of the theatre's gas-light. And Louis Latour, in that hurried interview when he put John Branster in charge of that newly made grave, told him they were the kinds she had most loved.

It was in the days when beautiful and notorious ladies were famous for the flowers they wore—did not the younger Dumas's heroine, too, choose camellias to be known by?

As to Hortense Stevens it is needless to insist that she was beautiful, and useless to deny that she was notorious. All one can say in defense of her is that it was a smallish, well-conducted world, the New York of those days, and that so lovely, and alas! so frail a creature attracted more attention in that decorous America than she might now.

An old print of her hangs in the entrance-lobby of one of those New York chop-houses, once so famous, which cover their walls with portraits of theatrical celebrities, who, so the public is asked to believe, habitually ate their steaks and their grilled kidneys and their Welsh rarebits there.

The fair Stevens, as they said in those days, ate, we may be sure, in her own parlor at the hotel, with roses and smilax on the table, and French champagne in silver buckets on the black walnut sideboard, in the manner of a princess rather than of any chop-eating Bohemian. Yet the lovely picture, yellow now with time, can give an imaginative man who steps inside from the clanging of this new Broadway a romantic moment upon the older street.

Her hair is softly waved, and there are ringlets and a quaint pleasant rose—pink, you guess, behind her shell-like ear—let us not be ashamed to use the pretty faded language of the period. There is another portrait of her in water-colors to be seen, oddly enough perhaps, in the dignified and rarely visited hall of the Historical Society, showing her as *Helen the Fair* in Offenbach's immortal operetta. She half reclines on a Greek couch in a marble hall looking upon a violet sea, and faint diaphanous draperies of pale blue and lilac reveal more than they hide her lovely contours. Even the amateurish hand which in that queer barren inartistic desert of the mid-century sketched her thus, managed to hint at a beauty of line which would have sent Flaxman to his knees before her. She was so fair, and so serene! Even now as she peers forth in the dimness of the Historical Society she seems so kind, yes, so good.

YET she was, it must be repeated, notorious. The succession of her admirers bewildered and should have shocked New York. Yet does any one reproach Venus that of all the goddesses she was most dedicated to love? Stevens, in her blinding, kindly beauty, had something of this serene paganism. Was it perhaps that in some primeval sweet way, in some ultimate kind ingenuousness she felt herself only beauty's guardian, and lavished it almost unconsciously upon an eager, hungry world?

She was popular from the beginning—hers were the last horses ever taken from a prima donna's carriage so that the gallant mob of Manhattan might draw her from the stage door to the hotel, and it is likely that on that last scandalous flight with Latour she found infatuated creatures to be loyal to the last. Yet the public is a spoiled, capricious thing; it was from the beginning angry at the inconsiderate

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It was indeed a place to count the world well lost

interruption of the run of "La Belle Hélène;" suddenly it became intensely moral.

Of course when the news crept back that she had died in an obscure Florida settlement only a few weeks after her disappearance from Broadway, the press did what it could to say the traditional *nil nisi bonum*. And Latour did not come back to raise again the flame of public indignation; he went on to Havana and thence to Paris, where he lived the last ten years of his life.

However, that first summer Mrs. Latour's suit for divorce renewed the scandal, which had a little died down, and the name of the poor dead servant of the public was freshly besmirched. Feeling was again bitter, partly on account of the Latours' two children, whom he deserted together with their mother, but even more because of another child, a small golden-haired, blue-eyed girl, the daughter of Hortense and an earlier problematical, possibly mythical Stevens. This child was then in the country upon a Connecticut farm.

This will be, as we go on, her story, or of one little crucial episode in it, but we can for a while leave her playing in the meadows along the river. She never remembered much of that mother, not more than a vision of beauty bending rarely, but benignantly, over her. But she heard with shame as she grew older of the notoriety and the scandal of her mother's end. She believed even when she made her first success that for the inner world of the theatre she was, after all, forever the daughter of the great Stevens, and that not much was expected of her in the way of morals.

This is the story of John Branster of Tomocala, too, and of his meeting, years later, with Linda Stevens. But we must go back to the Florida of her mother's days.

IT WAS before the railroad came. You went up the St. Johns by steamer to Palatka, and then as best you could by horse or mule drawn conveyance to the coast. It was hunting and fishing country; it was visited by sportsmen, and the old Palmetto House, which is still standing at Tomocala with a half-tumbled-down gallery along the river front, received the fugitives with some degree of style and comfort.

Louis Latour, who was the son of one of the old French residents of New York, would be, to our taste of to-day, perhaps, too handsome a fellow, too large-eyed, too silky-mustached, too full-blooded and even too carefully dressed for a figure of romance. But he was what ladies in those days loved, and who may dispute their taste? It is probable that he had been to Tomocala before, and judged it both remote and lovely enough for his present purposes.

THE season of operettas at the old Garden had been in full swing in March when the Stevens ended it by her flight. In Tomocala spring was in full tumultuous onrush. There were climbing tea-roses shedding heavy odors, and a strange exotic vine that clambered on the hotel gallery and broke out into huge globular masses of mauve blossoms like a giant wandering lilac. Magnolias flowered, and with the full moon mocking-birds sang all night. It was indeed a place to count the world well lost.

Helen of Troy wandering so far afield attracted attention. John Branster saw her once, stepping from a catboat. But he lived a solitary life and heard little or nothing of village gossip. Indeed there was not much gossip. One so beautiful had never walked beneath our orange-trees, no one had ever worn such white broadcloth pelerines, nor ever been seen with such strings of pearls. But she had come as Mrs. Latour, and it took some time for New York's scandal and its newspapers to reach the lonely reaches of the Indian River. And by then the fever had caught her, and the idyl was over. Latour was indeed frantic with grief, but desperate, too, to get away.

After she was buried in the cemetery in the woods out the Creek Road, and her simple gravestone had been ordered from John Branster, Louis Latour had a few last words with him.

"I sha'n't ever be back here," he said, "but I'd like to make some arrangements about—about her grave."

They stood at the door of Branster's cabin, and looked across his fence to the low white mound of sandy soil which marked where she lay.

"I want to think that it will be kept green, if any one can ever make it green. Are you going to go on living here by the cemetery?"

"Don't know any reason why I should leave," drawled Branster, "until I leave for the promised land, and I ain't in no ways in a hurry about that."

"Then will you take charge of it?"

Latour thrust a crumpled ball of bills into John Branster's hand. Branster slowly unfolded the bills. It was a hundred dollars, a fortune for Tomocala and those days.

"I'll send you something every year," said Latour, "wherever I am. And you make it look—as if somebody remembered."

"I'm liable to remember, myself," said Branster, smiling slowly, and turning over the money in his hands, "if this happens regular."

"IT WILL," came from the other, almost passionately. And then he went on, with an air of excitement which John Branster explained, and excused, by thinking that he was French: "And I want you to understand, whatever happens and whatever any one says, that she was—good. Good—and oh! beautiful!" he added, half to himself.

"I saw her once," said John Branster. "She certainly were beautiful. And good, I reckon."

He had not heard that she was bad, and so he paid no great attention to this odd New York gentleman's protests. Of course she was good: just how good was left for his imagination, working through the long lonely years after Louis Latour had gone, to realize.

The threads of our story are many, and their tangle lies across many years. But for a while we may linger in the country back of Tomocala and watch the springs come and go. For ten years there came to John Branster in April money from Paris. Then, with no word, it stopped, when Louis Latour died. But by this time the grave in the old cemetery had become as much John Branster's as Latour's. It is this which must be explained, though it will be difficult to make clear.

In a square around the grave there grew a thick hedge of hibiscus, red and pink. And within Branster set roses and camellias, because he had been told she liked them, and other flowering shrubs. He had always been a lonely man; the passing years made him almost a hermit. Yet is it possible that he came to feel himself not quite alone? There is mystery in deep woods

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Why will you put it that way, Linda? Don't you love me?

and magic in such flowering shrubs if one lives long with them. They shed with their perfume some strange balm, some estranging influence from the world. Remoteness and unreality hang in the air of any garden that is for a long time hidden from all but the gardener. And so in Tomocala, as the years deepened and gray touched John Branster's temples, he grew to feel better acquainted with the woman who had been left sleeping there in his charge.

He had seen her but once. He did not know it, but this had often, in that glittering past, been enough for a man to fall in love with her. Perhaps he fell in love with her. But he never put it to himself that way. It was just that the thought of her made him less lonely in a world for him naturally lonely. And if she was with God, as people said of the dead, then to think of her would be the nearest to God he could ever come.

Perhaps this is to explain this mysticism too much. He himself could never have put it this way. He only knew that she had been beautiful, and oh, good! And that he only was left to remember her, and to train the yellow *Perle des Jardins* roses which made a tangle at her head.

As Louis Latour was going away, those years ago, Branster had said to him:

"You're never coming back, you say. Will there be anybody else?"

'Oh, there's a daughter of hers," answered Latour almost carelessly. "She might come one day."

Nothing more had been said, nor asked. Neither Tomocala nor John Branster knew anything of Linda Stevens. And yet one day, eighteen years later, she came.

HORTENSE had been the creature of the serene, sunny, spacious days of the mid-century. Linda was of its feverish end. She, too, was all pink and gold, with eyes that were forget-me-not blue. But she was no goddess, but a sprite, complicated with doubts, torn with swift loves and quick hates, a thing of charm, of talents, of laughter and tears following each other. She was reckless, but, so they said, "good." (Her mother, oh, lovely kind Venus of an older, simpler world, had not been reckless, but also had been more rarely "good.")

Linda, for whom there had been an unexplained trust fund, and some kind of guardianship vested in an old-fashioned firm of lawyers, was sent to a convent school up the Hudson, from which at the age of eighteen she ran away to go on the stage. Messrs. Richards and Bleeckman had, after one stormy interview, acquiesced in her career, merely paying her debts occasionally when the debts were small enough to make that possible.

For the memory of what she was as an actress one must go to those who were young in the early nineties of the last century, just when Minnie Maddern was temporarily retiring from the stage and Maude Adams was just beginning upon it. Flighty, frothing, irresponsible creature she was, with quick turns to tenderness, and lyric moments when the dullest modern prose grew into poetry as she spoke it.

SHE had no poise, but a swift satiric modern intelligence, a dry biting humor set among fine-spun fantasies. She was made to be the idol of a time that was nervous and racked, morbid and perhaps degenerate, with some sense of the volcanic changes that a few decades were to bring to the world. She was meant for happiness, yet for suffering as well. Meant for love too, perhaps, a sacrifice to it as had been the fair and already fabled Stevens of an earlier day. But if this were so, she seemed determined to dodge destiny, to play with fire, and not be burnt, to show the world that Hortense Stevens's daughter could cut a new trail through the world, not follow in the one to which so many were ready to force her.

She allowed no one to speak of Hortense, except as one alluded to a distinguished historic figure. Yet she herself could be bitter on the topic. Indeed, it was one of the forms of her bravado to ask why she, Linda, should run straight since she came of different and more brilliant tradition. But though she was outrageous often, she did run straight. Yet she came to Tomocala one April as Hortense had come in April; and with her was Tom Burr Halton. Those who knew her best were least certain whether she was still running straight or not. Appearances were against her, but even in the last century's nineties the world had grown too modern for it to be at all safe to trust appearances.

All Tomocala knew was that they both, Stevens and Tommy Halton, arrived by the late afternoon train—the railroad had come to Tomocala by now—and went to the same hotel, though in as discreetly remote apartments as if they had been strangers. They dined together, however, the meal and its service increasing Halton's amazement at Linda's choice of Tomocala and the ancient Palmetto House as the goal of their flight from New York. Tom was a simple soul, simpler even than the handsome Louis Latour of the earlier escapade, and Linda a thousand times more difficult of comprehension than the goddess Hortense.

AFTER dinner—supper they called it at the Palmetto House—they went out upon the road along the river. There was a moon in the first quarter as there had been eighteen years ago, and the broad sheet of the Indian River shimmered in it unchanged; the same slim palmettoes showed black against the southern sky. From the village groves in flower a flood of sweetness of the orange-blossoms came down to the shore with the faint land breeze. A mockingbird sang a song to the young moon. For a short distance the loveliness of the soft night, its contrast with the raw March they had left, held them both silent. Finally the girl spoke:

"I expect you're wondering, Tom, why I chose this queer place to come to."

"I'm not asking you any questions, Linda," he answered, almost grimly.

"That's why you hope to get some answers, I suppose," she said, looking at him askance, and laughing a little, mischievously.

"Yes," he said, plainly a little stirred. "You know where I stand. I want you."

"And you've left your wife and children as a kind of guarantee of good faith. You know, Tom, it's that wife and children of yours that bother me. We're playing them a rather dirty trick. Still, we've come down here, and here we are, Tom. Do you like it?"

"Oh, the place is all right if—if you're all right."

"If I'm all wrong, you mean," she answered quickly.

"Why will you put it that way, Linda? Don't you love me?"

"I think I do, Tom. Really I hope I do. I should think a woman could love any man a night like this."

"Any man!" he repeated angrily. And he caught her roughly. "Kiss me," he commanded.

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The noon train's a good train for leaving town, mister.

"Surely I will. Where's the harm in kissing?"

They were by Collins's, and his grove was in full flower. The night was almost too heavy with sweetness. Slowly she disengaged herself from his arms.

"I guess I love you, Tom Halton. You are a handsome brute, you are, and I'm a fool. How much of a fool am I? That's what we came down here to find out. I'll tell you about Tomocala. My mother ran away too, with a man who loved her. They came here. I wanted to come, too. I wanted to see whether here the magic would work on me and I'd count the world well lost—that's what they say, isn't it?—for you. Of course she had the advantage of me; she'd no morals——"

"Linda!" protested the man.

"Why shouldn't I say so! You know that, although I'm Linda Stevens, I'm Hortense's daughter. That's why all you men in New York think you've a chance with me."

"My God," muttered Halton, "haven't I behaved myself? Haven't you held me a mile off? And don't I want to marry you as soon as she gets her divorce?"

"Why the devil should I want to marry you? If I find out that I'm bad, I want to be beautifully, recklessly bad, my child."

"All right," said he, in a low voice, "come on."

"But perhaps I'm not bad after all."

SHE laughed with that absurd and unexpected merriment of hers, and then, just as unexpectedly, she suddenly lifted herself on tiptoe and gave his cheek a bird-like peck, as different from the kiss of a minute earlier as could be. There were so many Lindas, you see. She began gaily to talk of the sailing and fishing they would try to-morrow—it was like a child who had run away from school—and to laugh about the dilemma at the Jefferson Theatre where the run of "Hearts and Faces" had, so it would probably be announced, been interrupted by the illness of Miss Linda Stevens.

"They were playing 'La Belle Hélène' when she came here," meditated Hortense's daughter. "I wish she hadn't died before I knew her—I was only five, you see. I wish I'd seen her act. Of course she sang, but as a matter of fact I'm a better actress, I'm sure. But she was lovely; so beautiful, my dear, so beautiful! She can't have cared much about me, I don't believe, or she wouldn't have gone away and left me the way she did. So I don't suppose she would care much about me now, not the way most mothers would."

The moon went behind a cloud, and the wind shifting lazily in the night brought a cooler air from the broad river. She caught his arm almost as if afraid of loneliness in the world.

"WHY talk about her so much?" protested Halton, in a roughened voice. "She's ancient history."

"I talk about her," replied the girl, "because we've come here to see her grave."

He drew away from her at this and her hand slipped from his arm.

"No, that isn't why we've come here," he said. "We have come here because you belong to me and I belong to you, and we're going to take what's our own, and tell the whole world to go to the devil."

"Well," said Linda, still in a low voice, "her grave is a shrine of love—that kind. And I've a lot of her in me. Half the time I think it's wrong, what we're doing—you leaving your wife and your children, and I leaving my work and the theatre and things I really care about. And there are times when I don't care a hang for any of them, and I thank God I'm her daughter and bad. That's a fine family feeling, Tommy, isn't it, but you profit by it."

"By God, Linda, don't you love me ever just like a simple human woman?"

"I don't know, Tommy. I love you sometimes because your hair grows the way it does on your forehead, and because your eyes are put in with a dirty finger, and because you very often hurt me when you put your arms around me. I'm all nerves most of the time and you make me forget them. You make me not care whether I can ever come to be a great actress or not. I stop worrying about it."

"Well, do stop worrying about it. It's too fine a night. Moon, you know, and sweet smells and—well, all that kind of thing. Linda, my darling," he began.

"To-morrow night will be a fine night too," she answered slowly, "and I'll have been to see her."

THERE had been a heavy dew the night before, under the cool light of the moon's first quarter, and for a few hours after dawn it still lay shining in the morning sunlight. Within the little green enclosure spring had come in fulness. The hedge was starry with hibiscus flowers, red and pink. And for the eighteenth time the old-fashioned *Perle des Jardins* rose drooped with heavy yellow buds. There was a little row of scented purple violets around the low mound. On one side yellow and white honeysuckle fought as creepers will with a hibiscus, twisting round its branches and mixing fine heavy-scented sprays of flowers with the other's great lily-shaped red blooms. In one corner, under the branches of a dark cedar, many thin translucent stems rose from a bed of begonia roots, carrying a foot or two aloft delicate pink blossoms, which seemed like a tiny pink sunrise cloud that had floated down to rest in the cool green shade. The orange-trees in his little home garden nearby contributed their fragrant odors. John Branster, kneeling to find a small spike of buds set upon his new favorite among the roses, stayed in this posture for a little while.

HE was not an articulate nor a self-conscious person. But the sun on him, the freshness of the stirring air, the sparkle of dew, the pulsing spring that was in the air and that drove all these green growing things around him to hurry to their blossoming, gave him a sense that life was precious and fragrant and good.

If his religion had turned to God, as religions mostly do, he would, as many another garden mystic, have felt the brush over his budding rosebush of angelic wings. As it was, he had only a vague feeling, as he had had so often, that he was not quite alone, that the fair beautiful creature who had come to sleep there so long ago still slept under the *Perle des Jardins*, and was happy and kept him company. Then there was a little sound in front of him. He lifted his eyes and saw Linda.

She was nonchalant and smiling. It may be it was part bravado. She was too sensitive a creature not to feel, in spite of her cynicism, the implications of a daughter's first visit to such a spot as this cemetery. But after all she had come for her inheritance of evil, and she stood now demanding it of the past.

"Could you tell me—you seem to be the only person around here—" she began. She could not guess of course that this fair, well-kept enclosure was what she had

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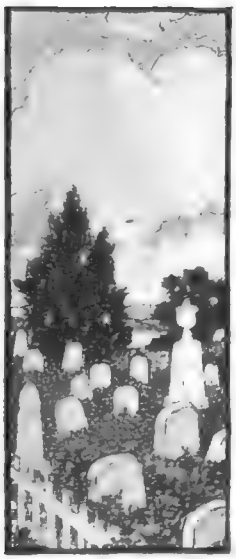

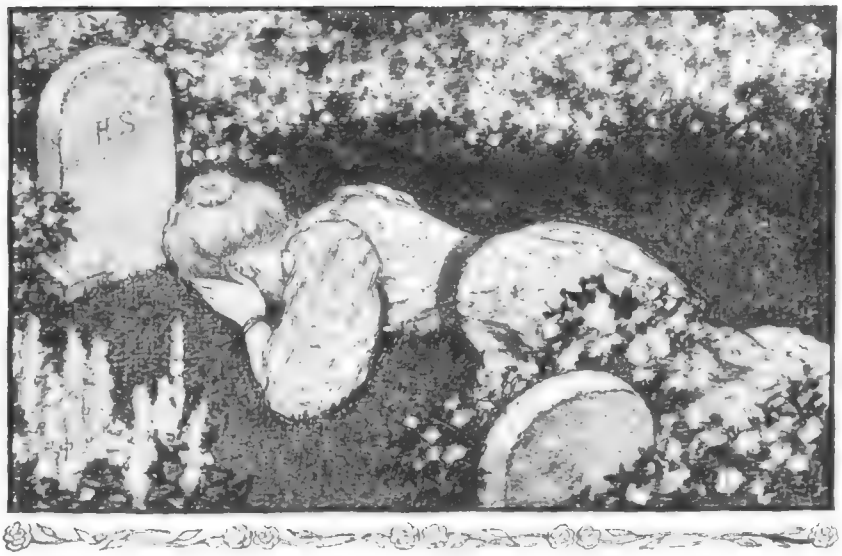

imagined a neglected and forgotten grave.

"Hortense Stevens!" exclaimed John Branster, after she had asked her question, and he stared at her a moment. Then he said very quietly, almost as if it were an introduction, "Here she is."

"Here?" from Linda, with an odd catch in her breath. "In this lovely place?" She saw the hibiscus and the pink begonia cloud, and the faithful Pearl of Gardens drooping its yellow buds. She smelled the honeysuckle and the orange. And suddenly the Floridian magic which those who love the great peninsular know so well began to cast its spell upon her. The world she had left began to grow dim. A strange fancy came into her mind.

"Are you—are you Louis Latour?"

"That Frenchman!" John Branster too fled back through the years. "Oh, no."

Another, still wilder, imagining caught her. Suddenly a ghost from a dimmer, more uncertain past arose.

"You're not Stevens, are you? Not my—no, of course you're not," she finished, laughing nervously at her foolishness.

"I'm John Branster," he said. "Are you anything to her?"

"Not much," answered Linda lightly; "only her daughter."

"Oh! We've been waiting for you near eighteen years, her and I."

"You and she! Eighteen years! Have you taken care—of this, all that time? Why?"

"Well, at first I reckon it was because I was paid to do it—by him, you know. And then after he died—well, I reckon I was still paid to do it—in another way. You been powerful long time coming," he finished, almost sharply.

"SHE went away and left me when I was only five. She wasn't ever much of a mother to me."

"I don't reckon you ought to speak that way about her, child. She was meaning to come back to you, most likely, if she hadn't been took by the fever, sudden."

"*Was* she meaning to come back to me? Did she really care about me? Do you know? Did she tell you anything?"

The questions tumbled out. Even Linda, as it were, listened to them in surprise. Had she, all these years, been lonely because she had no memory of a mother's love? This was preposterous, she protested to herself, while tears—of vexation—came into her eyes. Yet she repeated her question:

"*Did* she tell you anything?"

"No," replied John Branster. "I never had speech with her. I only just saw her once. She was powerful good-looking."

"Yes, I know. Lovely."

"And good too. So good!" he went on, echoing Louis Latour's plea after all these years.

"Good! Was she good?" asked her daughter. "Who told you that?"

"Why, him—Latour."

"Would he know?" Linda was ironical.

"WOULD'NT he? You mean because they'd only been married a week or so. Them's there," he explained hurriedly, "because that was her stage name."

"That's my name too."

"I see. A first marriage. She was well known, wasn't she, in them theatres?"

"They loved her!" Linda remembered the old prints, the picture even in the chophouse entry.

"Something to have had such a mother," said John Branster.

"Something indeed," replied Linda, and she laughed. But for all that she came forward slowly and knelt by the low mound.

"You've kept it beautifully, wonderfully. I don't pretend I understand why you did. But I am grateful to you."

"Looked to me like she was the kind of a woman would like to have flowers all around. We used to have them gardenias and camellias for a while, but they never did very well. I was sorry, for he said she liked them."

"Yes, great bunches of them, thrown on the stage. And sometimes with diamond jewelry hidden in them." Linda's eyes shone. These were indeed the brave, romantic days of the theatre. Then she suddenly turned almost angrily on John Branster. "But what do you imagine you can know of her or of her life?"

"I don't really know much," he admitted. "You see, it's this way—but I ain't no talker," he hesitated and stopped.

"Try to talk to me. Perhaps I need it," pleaded Linda.

"Well, I tended to things, and then he died, the Frenchman, in Paris. And I went on, like I said. And I reckon I just made up an idea of her. I didn't have much to go by."

"I suppose I didn't either," murmured the girl.

"And no one down here weren't likely to know much to tell me."

"And up there they knew so much to tell me." This was so low no one heard her, unless it was Hortense who slept.

"Somehow my idea grew, like the bushes. And some kind of a darned-fool way I got feeling that I *did* know her. Somehow it was nicer tending the flowers for some one you knew."

"And she seemed good?"

"Why, of course she seemed good. There weren't no other idea except goodness would go with what she looked—so beautiful."

"I wonder—perhaps she *was* good."

"Of course she was. Anyhow, you nor I ain't in no position to think otherwise. You're her daughter and I——"

"Well, what are you?"

"I? Well," he hesitated again. "If you wouldn't think it sounded too confounded foolish, I'd say I hope I'm a friend of hers."

"I don't think it sounds foolish at all," cried Linda. "I think you're the best friend she's ever had. I think for a long time you've been her only friend. I'd forgotten until—well, at present, we won't discuss what made me remember. But, well, I've imagination enough to like the idea of being her friend at last."

"THAT'S good," said Branster, but without curiosity of any kind. He was accepting the daughter as unquestioningly as long ago he had accepted the mother. "This here Rambler's doing nice, ain't it?" He showed her the buds set.

"Yes," she said, but she did not look at the rosebush. Her face looked puzzled and yet so eager, so young.

"Only—" she began slowly.

"Well——"

"Suppose some one should come along with the facts to prove that she hadn't been what you thought her, that she'd been—well, bad. Really bad."

"I wouldn't believe it. I don't know as I can explain to you, but—well, even if it was true that she was bad, I wouldn't believe it. You see, I've kind of got used to her being just as good as she was beautiful. I like her to be that way. She makes a better friend for me."

(*Continued on page 129*)

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UNDER *the* SPREADING CHESTNUT TREE

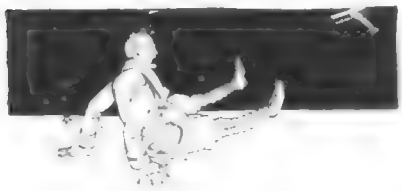
EDITOR'S NOTE—Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped, addressed envelope

THE foreman swore at Cassidy for not taking a full load of bricks up the ladder every trip.

One morning the supply of bricks ran out, and Cassidy, after gathering every one in sight, found he was still short of the proper number. He yelled to a workman on the fifth floor:

"What do you want?" asked the man.

"Throw me down wan brick," shouted Cassidy, "to make good me load."



"WHAT'S the hardest thing about aviation?" asked the would-be aviator.

"The ground," was the instructor's reply.

"UNCLE TOM," said a youth to an old darky, "they tell me you've seen the time when Washington was President. Is that true?"

"Well, Ah uster seed it, but dat was befo' probishon done went 'to 'fect."

A NAVAL lieutenant tells of a conversation between two woman visitors to a battle-ship in Hampton Roads.

"I have often wondered," said one, "why a ship had to weigh its anchor when it left port."

The explanation of the other was unique. "Well," she said, "the weight is constantly changing, you know, by reason of the—er—binnacles and things that accumulate on the anchor."

"OH, YES, sir, there's worse golf-players in the world than you are, sir," the caddie said kindly. "Lots worse!"

"Well, that makes me feel better," the dub responded. Then he swung his club, failed to touch the ball, but lifted a section of turf as large as a dinner-plate.

"Yes, sir," the caddie continued, "there's certainly worse players, but they never let nobody catch 'em out on the links."

"AVOID criticism," said the teacher. "Don't make it a practise to find fault with people for what they say or do. Don't pick flaws. Don't point out mistakes."

"Why, Teacher," said one pupil, "that's the way my father makes his living."

"You surprise me, George! What is your father's occupation?"

"He's a proof-reader, ma'am."

WHEN the train stopped at a little station in the South, a tourist from the North emerged and gazed curiously at a lean animal, rubbing itself against a scrub oak. "What do you call that?" he asked a native.

"Razor-back hawg, suh."

"What's he rubbing himself against the tree for?"

"He's stroppin' hisself, suh, jes' stroppin' hisself."

A YOUNG woman, anxious to do war work, decided to cheer the wounded soldiers in the hospitals.

"How many Germans did you conquer?" she asked of the first man she came to.

"Five," he replied.

"And how did you do it?" she asked.

"With my right hand," he answered.

"You are a hero!" she cried, "and I am going to kiss that hand five times!"

The rest of the ward had been listening with interest, and at the next cot was an Irishman who instantly answered her query. "Twenty-foive," he replied.

The lady looked somewhat nonplussed, but nevertheless asked, "How?"

"I bit thim," he said.

JACK, to his suffering partner: "I hate to have to tell you, but we're both doomed. She is making more water than the pumps can manage, and is sinking slow but sure."

His Partner: "Let 'er sink, Jack. I don't care how soon she does, if she'll only lay still when she hits the bottom."

A LIVE-WIRE suburban storekeeper got into legal difficulties, and it was rumored that he might have to give up his business. In order to hold his customers, therefore, he placed in the window a placard reading:

BUSINESS AS USUAL DURING ALTERCATIONS.

A PUBLIC gathering in a country town was interrupted by the entrance of one who made his way to the platform and whispered excitedly to the chairman.

"Is Mr. Smith in the audience?" broke forth the presiding officer. "I am informed that his house is afire."

Forty gentlemen sprang to their feet.

"It is the house of Mr. John Smith," added the chairman.

"Thank God!" fervently exclaimed one man, resuming his seat.

A SUBMARINE attack was on. The sea heaved and rolled. The destroyers were dropping depth-bombs. The deck of the troopship was lined with Yankee soldiers. All was silent. Suddenly the tension was broken by a small, weary-looking soldier.

"Say," he said in a hollow voice, "is there any one here wants to buy a nice watch and chain?"

THE three young Jones children were visiting their grandmother, and the occasion was one of great merriment. Soon it proved too strenuous for her, and she said:

"Good gracious, children, why are you so noisy to-day? Can't you try and be a little more quiet? You are making my head ache."

"Now, Grandma," said little Willie, "you mustn't scold us. You see, if it wasn't for us, you wouldn't be a grandma at all."

APPARENTLY the gold medal for extreme miserliness will have to be awarded to the commuter who, on leaving his wife in the morning, forewarned her thus:

"I may have to work late to-night, so in order that you won't worry, I'll telephone you at six o'clock. But when you hear the bell, don't answer it—you will know what it means, and I will get my nickel back."

MUCH to his annoyance, they were late for the game, arriving at the sixth inning.

"What's the score, Fred?" he asked a fan.

"Nothing to nothing."

"Oh, splendid!" she exclaimed radiantly. "We haven't missed a thing."

"NIGGER," warned one, "don't mess wid me, 'kase when you do, yo' shuah is flirting wid de hearse."

"Don't pesticate me, nigger," replied the other, shaking his fist. "Don't fo'ce me to press dis upon yo', 'kase if I does, I'll hit yo' so hard I'll separate yo' from amazin' grace to a floatin' opportunity."

"If yo' mess wid me, nigger," cried the first, showing the whites of his eyes, "I'll jes' make one pass, and dere'll be a man pattin' yo' in de face wid a spade to-morrow mornin'."

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THE DAILY
BUGLE
HAYES GENERAL STORE
"Want to get married, do ye? Alright. I kin marry ye, give ye board an' lodgin', print a weddin' announcement in the sassiety column, an' sell ye an equipment of Weed Tire Chains, all for twelve dollars. An' I guarantee ye won't do any skiddin' on the slippery road of life."

An exact reproduction of this beautiful painting by S. Werner, Size 18"x 24" in full colors will be sent to you for 15c in stamps.

AMERICAN CHAIN COMPANY, INC.

Bridgeport, Conn., U. S. A.

Sole Manufacturers of Weed Anti-Skid Chains

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FORTUNE'S FAVORITES

(*Continued from page 15*)

"What time did you say we'd go?" Rose's restlessness had seized her again. "I'm a-goin' to git dressed now."

They rode that afternoon in a magnificent creation that sparkled with brass trimming and that topped all other cars by a shoulder.

"She's higher 'n any o' the rest," Peel had gurgled joyfully, "an', my dumb, can't she go!" She flew with fair ease, Peel and Rose lolling comfortably on opulent leather cushions.

The man Fraser lolled with them, but it was plain to Rose that the addition of Fraser displeased the car's owner. There was a subtle air of antagonism between the two, a running fire of banter that suggested irritation; almost, she felt, a certain degree of previous acquaintance.

She disliked Fraser. He was a sleek citified man—the kind you saw pictures of in books. His well-cut clothing of gray heather, with checkered gray silk cap, and his close-shaved blue-black chin, his cigar, his air of experience, of confidence, and especially his manner of looking at her, disturbed Rose. Vaguely she felt even more disturbed by the immense intimacy that was rapidly flowering between him and her father, their interchange of familiar slaps and jests, of Fraser's offers of tobacco, and his solicitousness for them both.

"Pa's too easy-goin'," she thought uneasily.

"Fraser tells me he'd hang off on the car. It's old style, he says—but I d'know. I'm a mind to put in five hundred to bind the bargain, an' have the use of it a week. I kin easy git my money back. I don't go in for style as much as Fraser," Peel confided, coming up to their rooms before dinner. "Fraser's a nice chap. He's asked us will we go along to a new place o' amusement to-night, an' I said yes."

There was liquor on Peel's breath and Rose, going into her room, stared before her with a sense of disillusionment. Suddenly everything seemed strange, garish, remote from her desires. She sat down abruptly, a curious feeling of forlornness upon her, staring blindly before her, as though her gaze were on something immaterial.

Presently she sprang up, bathed and dressed. Her nervousness had left her, and when she came down to Peel and Fraser a hectic spot of color bloomed in either cheek, her eyes were strangely bright.

THERE was the usual dinner among the artificial palms and red velvet. Afterward, Fraser was to take them to a new place—a Palace of Pictorial Delight, with a lounge attached. They moved there in Fraser's car, a strange antithesis to the high-shouldered brazen affair they had patronized earlier.

And now Rose found herself sandwiched between the two, moving through a gaily painted entrance adorned with jeweled lights, into a well of cool darkness. She was aware of the scents, and faint, rustling sounds of the populous dark, of the close pressure of Fraser's arm and shoulder, of the faint masculine odor of mingled tobacco and bay rum he exhaled; of her father, on the other side, leaning confidingly, a little insane under this new afflatus.

"My friend, Fraser, here, tells me he knows a fine chance to invest if I c'd git in on it, Rose. He's got a good friend who owns half shares in a Arizona copper mine. He bought twenty-five thousand himself last spring——"

"YOU be careful, Pa," Rose said vaguely, then the celluloid flicker caught her.

It was no Barmecide's feast to-night. Russian countesses, divorcées, thugs, train-wreckers, orphan Annies, disported for her pleasure with—eternally like an obligato—Fraser's rather strident barytone murmuring in her ear, as his shoulder touched against hers.

It was an evening such as Rose had never known—fraught with strange sense appeals: new odors, cheap perfumes, blatant music, the feeling of youth, of freedom, a new ease, strange raiment. In spite of her aching head the girl sat forward, her nerves quivering in response. Then, suddenly, she uttered a short little sound, breathless, choked, as the film ended, gave place to a pallid oblong, that bloomed to new lettering:

"IN THE HEART OF THE HILLS"

It was only a simple mountain scene—a little house tucked in the lee of a hill, from which, as she watched, a young girl emerged. A slim, shabby, pretty young creature, moving like a radiant young Pippa. Her hair hung free, she swung her bonnet by one string, you could see her lips move as though in song, and at the foot of the hill she was alone no more. A young fellow, a slim, tanned, country youngster, came shyly, possessively through the alders, took both her hands in his and kissed her. And on this, Rose uttered another unintelligible sound. Fraser bent forward solicitously——

"Oh, let me be—let me be," she whispered fiercely, but she saw the rest of the picture through a mist of tears.

When the show ended a half-hour later she touched her father's arm, pale-faced.

"Pa, I want to go back to the hotel. My head hurts so. I—I can't stand no more."

"You ain't been yourself all day, Rosie. What's the matter of you?"

"Tired, I guess," she laughed dispiritedly. "I want to go back, is all. But, Pa, there's no need fur you goin'. It's only a step. I'll find my way."

"They's a place near by I'd like to see with Mister Fraser. He's asked some friends to meet us there. You was speakin' of a little game, you said." Peel looked at Fraser, then turned to Rose, "one of 'em's the party I was speakin' of, that owns the copper-mine——"

"You better watch out, Pa," she whispered.

"Oh, teach your granny to suck eggs," laughed Peel.

"Look here, there's no need of breaking up our party. If Miss Rose must go back, I'll take her, Anthony. I won't be five minutes, and you can wait here. You won't wait alone. I told my friend Bronson to look us up here. He's probably in the lounge now. If you'll give me two minutes to spot him——"

"My friend Bronson" was not difficult to spot. A sleek, reddish-haired man with small, quick-glancing eyes and plump white hands, clad in the same sophisticated mode Fraser affected, joined them almost immediately. Rose saw her father drawn into conversation; found herself led gently away and tucked up beside Fraser in his car.

"It's only a five-minute spin," he said, yet when he came to the first corner he slid by, veered toward a little park.

"Let's have a bit of a run in here. The air'll do you good. Head feel any better?"

"The air's nice, but I wanta go home," demurred Rose.

"Oh, just a minute—nice place here. Lots of pretty trees and flowers, nice gravel track to ride on. All to ourselves, too. Good Lord, but it's a fine night." Fraser pushed his silk cap back on his forehead.

"I guess you know I've wanted this pretty bad, little girl, don't you—ever since I saw you this morning? You're a pretty little thing—prettiest girl I've seen in a dog's-age. What are you going to make that silly old dad of yours do with you, anyhow?"

"You ain't got the right to talk to me like that, Mr. Fraser."

"Oh, I'll take the right," Fraser laughed easily, sending his car skimming out of a pool of light into a span of deep-black shadow, where he slowed down, then stopped. "There's plenty of other rights I could take, too—Rosie. Rosie—that's your name, isn't it? A kiss now. I wouldn't mind taking a kiss from that pretty mouth—come, now—come, sweetheart. Oh, don't be stand-offish." He leaned suddenly close.

"Don't you try to make love to me, Mister Fraser. I won't listen to no such talk."

"Oh, come on—come on, little girl—just one—one kiss—Rosie—why, what's a kiss—those black eyes—just one—sweetheart——"

SHE eluded his arm, crouched away from him with clenched hands.

"You better take me home, Mister Fraser; you're Pa's friend, but Pa wouldn't stand this."

"Your Pa!" Fraser threw back his head and laughed; "why, little one, there won't be enough left of your old dad to-morrow to know which end he's on. This is the night we slaughter the innocents. But let's not bother with your dad. I brought you out here to talk about you—you pretty thing——"

"If you touch me, I'll scream."

"Scream all you like. There's no cop this side of the park entrance—*here*—no, you don't—oh, *would* you—*now then*—you goin' to kiss me—or—*have—I got—to make—you?*"

He had caught her to him suddenly, pinning down her arms, covering her with his body, his face close to hers. But he reckoned without the hill-girl's supple, almost virile strength. With a sudden furious wrench she tore herself free, struck him passionately—once—twice!—across the face, then as he uttered a sudden muffled cry, threw up his hands involuntarily, she bent, unfastened the door, and,

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First came The Ultona which introduced an all-record phonograph. Then the Brunswick Tone Amplifier which brought better tone. NOW Brunswick Records, interpreted by great directors.

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In all the history of phonographic art there are no chapters more interesting than those allotted to Brunswick.

It rested with this old-time house to introduce the Brunswick Method of Reproduction and the advancements it provides.

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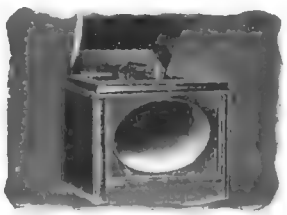

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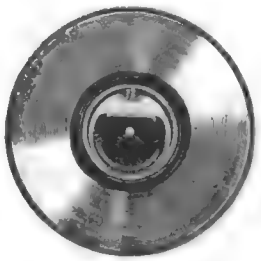
And NOW Brunswick Records



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half falling, half stumbling, fled down the drive. Her high heels bent under her feet, her hat dangled over one ear, great sobs tore their way from her breast.

Behind her, Fraser, his nose bleeding profusely, unromantically into his handkerchief, watched her run, swearing angrily.

"If she spills the beans now—beats it to the old one—damned little hill-cat—cursed little rube!"

But Rose in her confusion knew only one thought. Home—such haven, such home as the hotel offered! She saw a break in the shrubbery wall before her—a side entrance with a file of electric lights. A woman gave her direction to her hotel, and she ran on and on.

Still wide-eyed, nerve-torn, she hurried through the lobby and corridor, past gaping pages, bell-boys or indolent loungers. Not until she had closed her bedroom door, snapped the lights on in her blue and pink and brass bower, did she break down. Then she sank upon the bed, a storm of sobs shaking her. "Oh, Hilary! Oh, Pa," she wept, "why did we ever come away?"

There was no trace of shrewishness here, of arrogance, or confidence. It was a very small, rumpled heap of womanhood that lay on the big bed, crying out her heart. As she lay there, it seemed her heart must break. For there was no comfort here—not among these strange symbols that spoke of other ways, other usage. Not a familiar note, not a single reassuring message came from the lumpish, unfamiliar lumber about her. The very babble and roar of the city, coming in through the windows, seemed sinister. Passionately she lay, thinking of the picture she had seen: of wide, clear skies, and humbler folk with simpler habits—the sort of place in which she belonged. Her world was out of joint here because it lacked something. What the something was, she faced quite unashamedly. A line recurred to her: "Home is where the heart is."

"As if I didn't know where mine was, all the time!" she cried passionately.

Suddenly she sprang up, fell to pacing the floor. "I can't stand it no more," she voiced. "I'm a-goin' to quit. He's jes' got to let me when he understands."

She meant to tell him when he came in—her father. He must know, must sympathize, who had always been kind to her.

BUT Peel did not come in for a long time. Day was breaking, the first milk-carts had begun to rattle by; the night din had subsided more or less, when Rose, sitting impatient in her room, heard a shuffling, indecisive sound in the hall, her father's door opening.

"Pa!" she called sharply, hastening to the communicating door.

It was her father, but a father she did not recognize. Peel Anthony stood just inside his bedroom door with wavering, vacant glance. At Rose's word he put up a vague, indefinite hand, then like a man in the last stages of exhaustion, made three uncertain, staggering steps, and fell heavily across the bed, face down. And Fraser's prophecy returned to the girl's mind.

"Drunk!" she said scornfully; "drunk's loon; an' you that was so smart, Pa!"

Her sense of isolation, of despair returned. She went back to her own room.

"Not fur hours, anyhow—oh, Pa!" She looked about her waveringly; then her eye fell on the little desk, with its array of stationery. "If I can't do it reasonable, I'll do it the other way. I'll *tell* you, Pa, 'stead of askin'."

She sat down, drew out paper and began to write. When she had finished, she put on her hat, carefully counted the change in her purse and, quietly closing her door, withdrew softly down the hall.

III

WHEN the morning local drew in at Carter's Eddy a single passenger dismounted.

A young and stylishly clad lady, a veritable glass of fashion, who turned away briskly, striking out for the gravel road that led toward the hills. She walked with utter confidence for some time, but at the junction, a "dugway" that turned off from the main road, her pace slowed.

She stood here a little uncertainly, sniffing at the sweet morning air, heavy with the perfume of dew-washed cut grass. On either side of her, lush meadows of clover hay stretched away up-hill, laced with daisy and wild artichoke, and, as she moved forward, a painted bunting flashed up into a chestnut tree hung in full flower. A sob broke in the young lady's throat; she pressed one hand quite absurdly against her heart; for a moment her body seemed to go faint. Then she moved onward—upward.

It was not a steep ascent—a ribbon of road that penetrated a vista of rich hill-land and wide sweep of growing hay. Yet it seemed to require all the power she possessed to sustain her upward climb. Yet, after all, she had not so far to go; had known, perhaps, where she would find him.

A young man, hatless, with bared forearms, was swinging his scythe in an upper field. He stood out brown and wholesome against the blooming daisies. His movements were rhythmical, beautiful; a wide, delicately blue-green swathe springing like a broad ribbon at his heels. He was the reaper incarnate—young, virile, American. And the effect on the young lady was devastating. She pressed her hand to her heart once more and almost crumpled down upon the path. And just here the young man saw her, standing there, drooping toward him like an animate wild rose, her pink skirts aflutter. He dropped his scythe and came to her with long, eager strides. The girl held out both hands. She was crying.

"Hilary! Oh, Hilary—*dear!* I came back! I—came to ask you—to give me back—the word—I said - if you still—want me."

"If I still want you!" the boy cried hoarsely.

And you could see a certain tightness and shadow go out of his young face, and something like an actual light spring into it. And he took all the way to the drooping pink rose in a last gigantic stride.

IT WAS almost three o'clock when Peel Anthony woke, with a strange ringing in his head, pulled himself wretchedly, stupidly to a sitting position, and realized his whereabouts.

A clock on the dresser indicated the hour.

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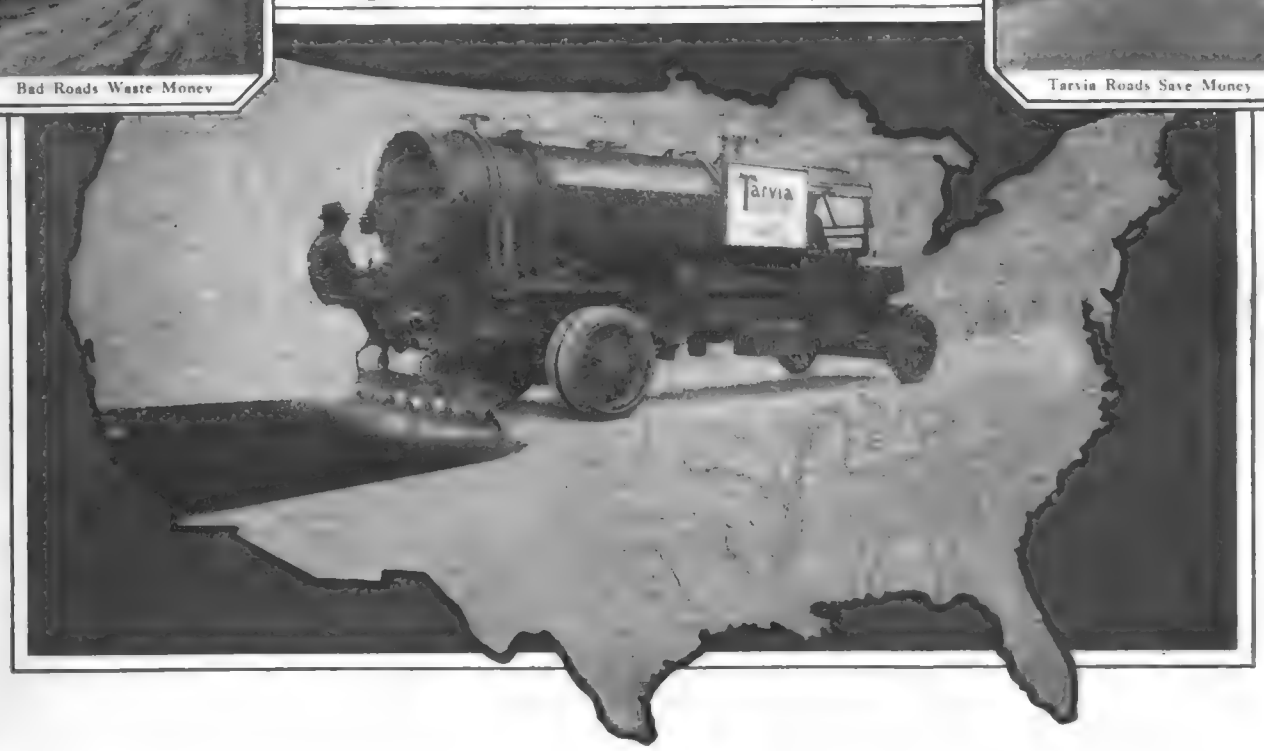
Put your town on the good roads map this year



COME to think of it, is there anything so expensive to a community as *bad roads?*

Bad roads slow up business, lower land values, make markets inaccessible, isolate neighbors, cost a lot of money and waste much more.

People tolerate bad roads year after year because they *think* good roads cost too much.

But good roads *are not* expensive, if they are built in accordance with a well-thought-out program, somewhat along these lines.

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2. Its initial cost—
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Special Service Department

In order to bring the facts before taxpayers as well as road authorities, The Barrett Company has organized a Special Service Department, which keeps up to the minute on all road problems.

If you will write to the nearest office regarding road conditions or problems in your vicinity the matter will have the prompt attention of experienced engineers. This service is free for the asking. If you want *better roads* and *lower taxes*, this Department can greatly assist you.

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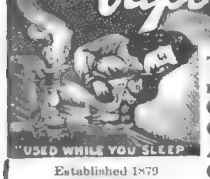

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Simple, safe and effective, avoiding internal drugs.

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THE VAPO-CRESOLENE CO. 62 Cortlandt St., New York
or Leeming-Miles Building, Montreal, Canada

"My dumb!" he said softly, and essayed to rise. But at the agony in his head fell back again.

Not for some minutes could he get himself erect; then, a splitting sensation through all his joints, he groped his way across the room and flung open Rose's door.

An empty room. Precise and unoccupied. There was something in its chill vacancy that sobered him. He moved over to the smooth bed. And there he saw her letter.

"Mr. Peel Anthony," in Rose's round, childish hand. It took him some time to read it:

DEAR PA:

I take my pen to tell you ime tired of being rich and so ime going home to Hilary because love is best. I should never of come. I knew it from the first. I would tell you in words but you are to drunk to talk so you must find this. I love you to Pa and hope you will be as happy as I expect to be.

Your respectfull Daughter,
ROSE ANTHONY.

Peel read dazedly. "Tired of being rich"—"to drunk"—the gist of it struck him like a blow. Drunk! Had he been drunk? The girl was mad—he swayed against the bed in a vertigo, fighting for coherent thought. Drunk? Well, perhaps a little. "Tired of being rich"—now he was aware of a curious tag of anxiety, a fearful heart-sickening thrill. Had he—what had he done exactly? His "roll," which he had a vague memory of demanding from the hotel clerk somewhere near midnight last night! Was it safe? Why had he asked for it? To pay his poker debts was it, or— Again the anxious thrill as last evening's events appeared in a blurred maze to him. Fraser and his friend Bronson and the two others. They'd played pretty high——

THEN out of the mist he caught it clearly. The copper mine, of course. Bronson's friend! He had been offered a rare opportunity, not even offered it exactly. Had been yielded to reluctantly, in fact. Because Bronson had another party in his mind. He had sold the stock-certificates only after Fraser had worn himself out persuading——

And now, the cold sweat of panic! If he was as drunk as Rose suggested, had he preserved the certificates? Vaguely he recalled their presence in his hand, but nothing after that. He might have dropped them, lost them, given them, even, in his state.

He stumbled back to his room, to the light-weight overcoat he had thrown down upon a chair.

The nervous reaction when he slipped his hand into the breast pocket and drew out the brown manila envelope containing the six green-and-white certificates for one thousand dollars' worth of stock, respectively, in the El Paloma Copper-Mine almost unmanned him. He sat down pale, shaken, smiling a little sickly smile of horror at his near escape.

Presently, in some degree restored, he rose to freshen his clothing and bathe his face.

And it was as he dipped his face into the bowl of running water that panic struck him again. This time like a black, hideous nightmare. In his shaken state the impact was horrible. That mining-stock, was it worth anything? Fraser—Bronson, what did he know of them? The chill hand of suspicion clamped itself on his shoulder now; his face whitened, his eyes grew haggard.

"My dumb!" he cried wretchedly, and with feverish haste prepared him for the street.

He must know! He must be advised! A lawyer man, some bank, perhaps—there must be places where he could find out!

Like a man with an adder at his heel, he fled down to the desk.

IV

WHEN the Mountain Special steamed out from the Eddy that evening, it left a passenger behind who very quickly spurned its dust, struck out for the upper hill reaches, a long, lanky individual past fifty, with grizzled reddish hair and whiskers, clad in new, rather striking, plaids, that fitted poorly. As he walked he occasionally thrust one hand into his pocket and extracted a palmful of licorice jujubes, which he placed in his mouth.

He moved deliberately, like one with definite aim, yet with a certain amount of enjoyment, as of one who has lately faced a bitter crisis and been released from carking cares and certain harassments, and when the timber about the road grew thicker, he sat down by the wayside, and, carefully removing his shoes, completed his journey in two stockinged feet.

The road grew more solitary, swerving at an elbow of beech into an untidy little path that ended abruptly at the door of a small hill-cabin.

"Home!" said the pedestrian, with an appraising eye. "Same's ever an' a lot better."

With deliberate movement he produced an iron key and let himself in.

A bare, neat room revealed itself, orderly, but dusty. A table, a stove, some carpet strips, shelves, traps, a gun on the chimney. Their owner looked about him, a curious peace creeping into his face.

He stood thoughtful a moment, staring about him, like one remembering a recent dream.

"I d'know but I'm *glad* I lost it—I *am* glad. 'S nothin' but a care an' responsibility—'easy come—easy go'——"

He crossed suddenly to the shotgun on the wall, lifted it down with tender fingers.

"Howdy, ol' codger—I'm back home again. I—I've had a little disappointment. But you an' me 've had some wonderful doin's, ol' friend—we'll have 'em again." He stood looking about him, thoughtful once more.

"Riches," he said after a moment, "riches jes' means responsibility. Havin' jest enough's the thing. An' doin' simple-like is best—that's me!"

Suddenly he started, as though remembering something, then quickly reached to the shelf, ran his hand along it. His fingers brought away a rank black cob. He lit it deliberately, pulling unctuously. Then he crossed to the open doorway and looked down the hillside at the fading sunlight, at the quiet river disappearing beyond the hills. A great peace encompassed him.

"I couldn't ask no better," he said thoughtfully, "an' so long's Rosie's happy I ain't sorry it's gone. What's this fuss o' *havin'* things? Havin' enuff's what you want. Simple-like," he drew a long breath of rapture through his old cob, "simple-like is best!"

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What life will mean to you

BEAUTY, comfort and infinite opportunities for happiness are the foundations of life at San Diego, California.

Ocean, mountain and bay, Nature's complete panorama, unite here to make an ideal setting for your permanent home. Soft breezes from the warm Pacific are fragrant the year 'round with the perfume of millions of flowers, and lawns and foliage are always green.

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Mother Pins Her Faith to Musterole

In days gone by, mother mixed a mustard plaster when father had bronchitis or brother had the croup, but now she uses Musterole. It is better than a mustard plaster.

She just rubs it on the congested spot. Instantly a peculiar penetrating heat begins its work of healing—and without fuss, or muss or blister.

Musterole relieves without discomfort.

The clean white ointment sets your skin a-tingle. First, you feel a glowing warmth, then a pleasant lasting coolness, but way down underneath the coolness, old Nature is using that peculiar heat to disperse congestion and send the pain away.

Made of oil of mustard and a few home simples, Musterole is uncommonly effective in treatment of the family's little ills. It takes the ache out of grandfather's back. It soothes sister's headache. It helps mother's neuralgia.

Mother pins her faith to it as a real "first aid."

She is never without a jar of Musterole in the house.

Many doctors and nurses recommend it. 30c and 60c jars; hospital size $2.50.

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MUSTEROLE
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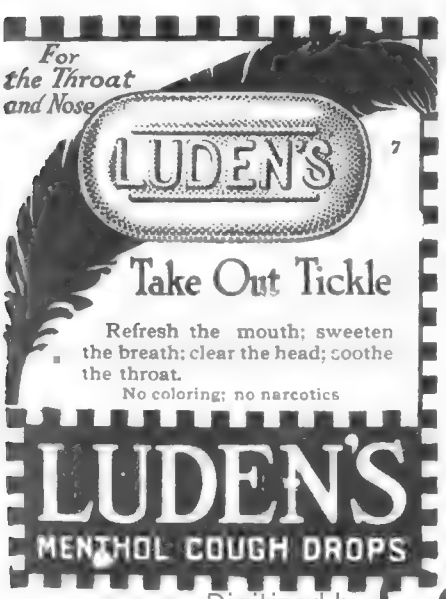
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LUDEN'S
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Refresh the mouth; sweeten the breath; clear the head; soothe the throat.
No coloring; no narcotics
LUDEN'S
MENTHOL COUGH DROPS

DICTATED—BUT NOT RED

(*Continued from page 24*)

"That's a splendid idea!" Trevison cried. "Brilliant! See here! I'd like to get one week-end party like that myself. I know some chaps with oodles of money who're just looking for a chance to do something serious—just the way I was, Ira——"

"I thought you said you didn't know anybody?" Ira turned on Bituminous, not in suspicion, but chiefly because he wanted to delay to ponder the possible complications of Sophie's scheme.

"Oh, I didn't know them, except in a bar-room way," Bituminous laughed. "And I hadn't an idea that they wanted to do anything but loaf around and swap stories and lay up booze. But when I went around collecting for you, I found out they were as sick of their life as I was——"

He ambled along, narrating his experience with these unhappy gentlemen of leisure. Sophie devoted herself entirely to his tale. And so Ira was free to pursue his own thoughts. It looked good, this scheme of Sophie's. Meeting important people in a social way is most profitable. It was the most diplomatic procedure—used in the finest business circles, too. It would establish his leadership, would make Knob Hill the Mount Vernon of the Second American Revolution. Every great reformer would soon acquire the habit of running up to Knob Hill for a conference.

"I APPROVE of that plan," Ira declared. "To-day is Wednesday. H'm. Hardly time to get the place in shape for this week-end. I suggest that we begin by having our Arrangements Committee meet next Saturday and Sunday at Knob Hill. We'll have a lot of business to clean up, no doubt. Bring up all the proofs of my speeches, and those mailing-lists, and whatever else you have by then, comrade."

"Oh, that'll be fine!" Sophie brightened visibly. "I'd love to get out of town for a couple of days—after so much hard work!"

"It is nice," Trevison added wistfully. "The country's lovely now! I'd rather be there than in this burg."

A short, painful silence. Then Ira spoke up. "Why, Trevison, if you've nothing else to do next Saturday, come along."

"That's good of you, Ira. I'll be there sure. How about motoring up there? Is it too far?"

"A hundred and fifteen miles," Ira replied, and he observed his beloved observing Bituminous observe her.

"By George, that's a short run," Bituminous smiled gleefully. "I wonder—Miss Delatour, were you planning on going up in your own car?"

"My car," said she, "only runs as far north as Van Cortlandt Park. Some day they may extend the tracks as far as Yonkers——"

"Won't you run up with me, then?" Bituminous urged her much more than those mere words did. His unrestrained, boyish eagerness made the girl laugh pleasantly—and accept.

Ira rose and bowed, a little stiffly. "Perhaps," said he with a touch of frost, "you can instruct Mr. Trevison in his new duties while I am away. I'm sure he'll prove a willing learner. Good-by till Saturday morning at Knob Hill." He caught up Sophie's hand. But he did not shake hands with Trevison. And strange to relate, Trevison didn't seem to notice the faint discourtesy. He was occupied exclusively with the Woman of Destiny.

XII

Pillsburg Ponderings, Pleasant and Unpleasant, with Reference to Past and Present.

MANY a great man, returning after years of hard-won success to his boyhood home, has sensed its stale lethargy. In the midst of unmown lawns and stray cows, High Ideals have gone to seed, Ambition is off fishing at the mill-pond, and Duty dozes under a lilac-bush. To the great man whose every nerve is keyed to the high tension of the Larger World, this apathy seems wicked. He may vent his scorn upon the laggard natives. But a supreme genius rises above this sentiment. He appreciates the slow processes by which humanity evolves her rarest flowers, the leaders of the race. He understands that his own birth is the blind toiling of innumerable generations—a toiling not soon to be repeated, for the very great are few and far between, like the stars in heaven, mere points sprinkled across the infinite emptiness of history. Is it not nobler, then, to forgive the deadly quiet of the old home town? When a mouse labors and brings forth a mountain, surely the proud mother has a right to rest for an aeon or two.

These sweetly solemn thoughts flooded the leader of the Second American Revolution as he alighted at the station in Pillsburg toward the day's end. Same old river, twinkling through the ragged willows! Same old dusty flour mill beside the dam! Same old crowd in the bumpy field beside the mill playing baseball! Same depot loungers eyeing him vacuously!

"Poor devils! They don't even know who I am!" Ira mused. "Verily, a prophet is without honor in his own country!"

He chose his jitney-man and gave directions in a resonant voice. The depot loungers turned to inspect a female traveler, who might have been either a sewing-machine demonstrator or a retired movie actress.

"Good God!" Ira moaned. "How little these creatures know of the great currents of humanity! What if I hadn't had the vision to see through the sham of life in Pillsburg! What if I had been content to stay here! I might have become one of those loafers! And there would have been no Second American Revolution!"

The jitney boiled up Perkins's Hill, the fashionable part of town; past the high school, where he had delivered his first truly great oration—the one on "The Duties of the Rising Generation"; on past the red-stone mansion of the president of the national bank, who doubtless still had on file the name and address of Ira M. Cummins, "in case they might need his services later."

Over the hilltop, and then down to the ragged fringe of the town. There was the squat white cottage where old man Mattison used to run his modest dairy farm, and there was the same old gray barn behind the cottage where Martha used to milk

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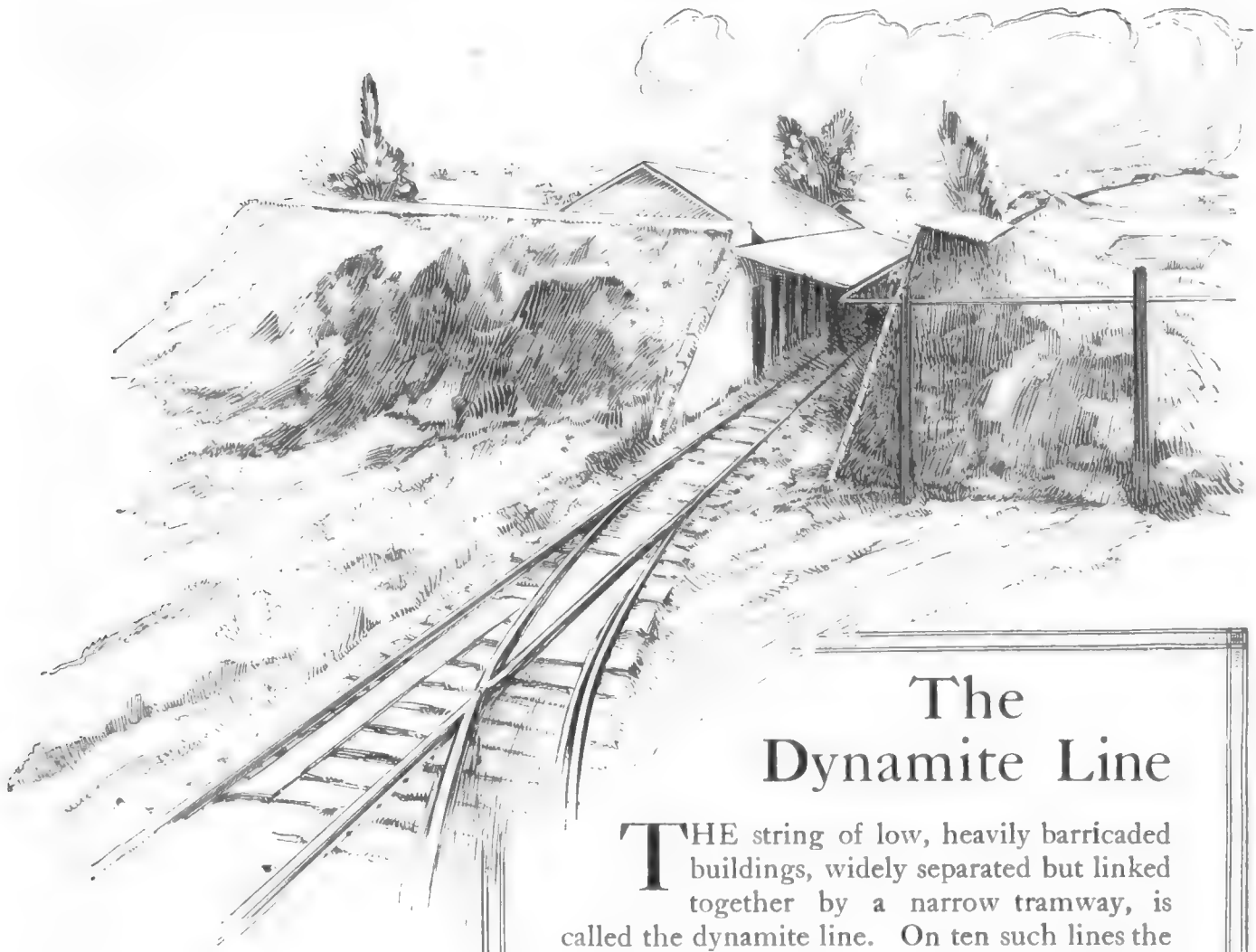

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The absence of noise and bustle, of whirring wheels and clanking steel, makes a striking contrast to the usual accompaniment of manufacturing production on a large scale. In little rubber-tired buggies the nitroglycerin is delivered to the mixing house just as it is needed, and with equal precision and dispatch the other ingredients arrive via the tram line. From here the dynamite is forwarded in bulk and passes from one small building to another until the last process is complete and the finished product reaches the storage magazine.

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A spark, a sputtering fuse, and the energy stored in these little cartridges of dynamite springs forth with a mighty roar to do our bidding, whether it be to remove a mountain or a stump; to provide copper for our pennies or for our miles of electric wires, steel for our pen points or for our railroads; to mine coal for our factories and hearth fires or jewels for our adornment.

The power supplied to our industries by the makers of explosives, these deft and careful workers on the dynamite line, will produce enough materials to build a city every day.

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"Diamond Dyes" Make Shabby Apparel Just Like New—So Easy!

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cows before school. Ira contemplated the barn through a mist of warm memories that seemed to eddy around an apple-cheeked, partridge-plump little girl with sturdy arms and peaceful but determined eyes. That old gray barn! Out of it had come the three hundred dollars that had carried him to New York. The three hundred dollars that funny little Martha had lent him that heart-breaking day when he had tackled Uncle Ezra for aid in opening a School of Oratory in Pillsburg. Martha had earned that money milking cows in that old gray barn!

"By George!" Ira almost spoke aloud. "It was Martha who gave me the idea of starting a school in New York! Odd! Where could she have gotten the notion?"

The mystery was insoluble. It must have been an act of Fate. Suppose he hadn't followed her suggestion? He'd still be over a grocery store in Main Street, drilling dullards in the First Principles of Elocution. Horrible vision!

"A Cow made possible the Second American Revolution!" Ira gazed at bright green rye. "I wonder, can Martha realize what she's done?"

Past a still white church, around a graveyard, upon another long slow hill, the jitney flew, and at last mounted Knob Hill.

THERE gleamed the Heritage! Even fairer than in memories, too! The same old four guardian oaks, almost blotting it out in their green shade. The same old red barn with the hip roof and the shiny lightning-rod and the swallows of early dusk darting in and out. But there was an air of neatness and prosperity about the fences and the whitewashed hen-houses that was new.

Ira alighted under the west oak. As he motioned to the chauffeur to carry his baggage around to the front door, a soft song came floating through the evening air. It was a woman's voice, and the tune a choir of memories. What was it, anyhow? He had often heard it, years ago. It was in church, Sunday, a drowsy hot morning, locusts shrilling outside, the organ droning.

Ira hurried toward the source of the melody, somewhere at the back of the house. He came to the huge north porch, darkened, as of old, by a grape-vine whose tentacles lovingly gripped walls and roof. He tiptoed across uneven flagstones and spied the singer.

She was peeling potatoes, a colander propped between her knees. A fluffy yellow cat dozed at her feet, which were encased in quaint white stockings and atrocious red felt slippers. The slippers sagged around her strong ankles and betrayed a neat patch in one of the stockings. The sleeves of her brown calico dress were rolled up as far as strong hands could force them over two astonishingly strong arms whose plumpness sent a wave of profound envy and despair through the observer. In the greenish half-light under the grape-vine her full throat, bared to the cool, gleamed like living marble. A pleasant picture, all in all.

But who could the person be? Uncle Ezra surely wasn't married. And he hadn't mentioned anybody being with him except the Cow. This was plainly not Martha. Ira, faintly embarrassed, coughed and said "Good evening."

The woman started. She ceased her melody and scanned Ira narrowly.

"I'm looking for Mr. Cummins," said Ira pleasantly, and noted the physical strength of her splendid bare arms.

"He's over at the Elm Hollow auction," she said. "He ought to be back soon, though, if you can wait. Oh! Maybe you're the gentleman from Buffalo to see about that shipment of Little Marvel? I can tell you all about that."

"I don't happen to be." Ira wondered what Little Marvel would be. Probably a horse that Uncle Ezra had sold or bought. Ezra was still swapping horses, of course, just as he used to do at the "after-meeting" under the wagon-shed at the church every Sunday morning.

Another flood of memories rushed in. Ira was a small boy, and Uncle Ezra was driving him into the graveled yard of the old Methodist church. Uncle tied his fat bays under the wagon-shed and led him into the stiff-backed pew, close up to the pulpit. They sang "How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord"—ah! that was the song this woman had been singing a minute ago!

Uncle Ezra sang the loudest of all. He sang with zest. Folks in near-by pews glanced at him and smiled. Sermon over, they strolled out. Some men edged up to Uncle and laughed: "Well, Ez, comin' to the after-meeting?" Then Uncle rubbed his chin and said maybe he would. Under the wagon-shed a dozen farmers gathered. They looked over uncle's fat bays, and Uncle looked over their teams. And then uncle drove home behind a pair of skittish blacks, chuckling to himself.

"WELL, then, I guess you'll have to sit down and wait for him."

Ira came back to earth. The woman pushed up a chair for him. As she returned calmly to her potatoes, Ira sensed that the period of rhetorical suspense had past.

"I am Ira M. Cummins," he announced.

The porch was quite gloomy, what with the fading daylight and the thick grape-vine. The woman stepped briskly up, took him by the shoulders and turned his face into the faint emerald dusk.

"Well, I declare! Ira! I didn't recognize you. It was so dark. And your voice! It is changed! My, I'm glad to see you! We weren't expecting you so soon—but you're welcome just the same!"

Ira trembled faintly under her firm grasp. Who was she, to lay hold of him in this familiar way?

"I'm afraid," he laughed, "that you have me at a disadvantage. If you'll turn your face to the light, maybe I'll recognize you, too!"

He scanned her with embarrassment. There was an elusive familiarity in it—nothing more.

"Oh, dear! This is funny!" she laughed mellowly. "Why, Ira! I'm Martha Mattison. I never dreamed I'd changed so much—let's see, it's five years, isn't it, since we've seen each other?"

The leader of the Second American Revolution had mastered that well-thumbed volume in his library entitled "Ten Cures for Stage Fright." He had also assimilated "Presence and Poise in Fifteen Lessons." But both works failed him in this crisis. He fixed a glassy eye on the woman and mumbled idiotically:

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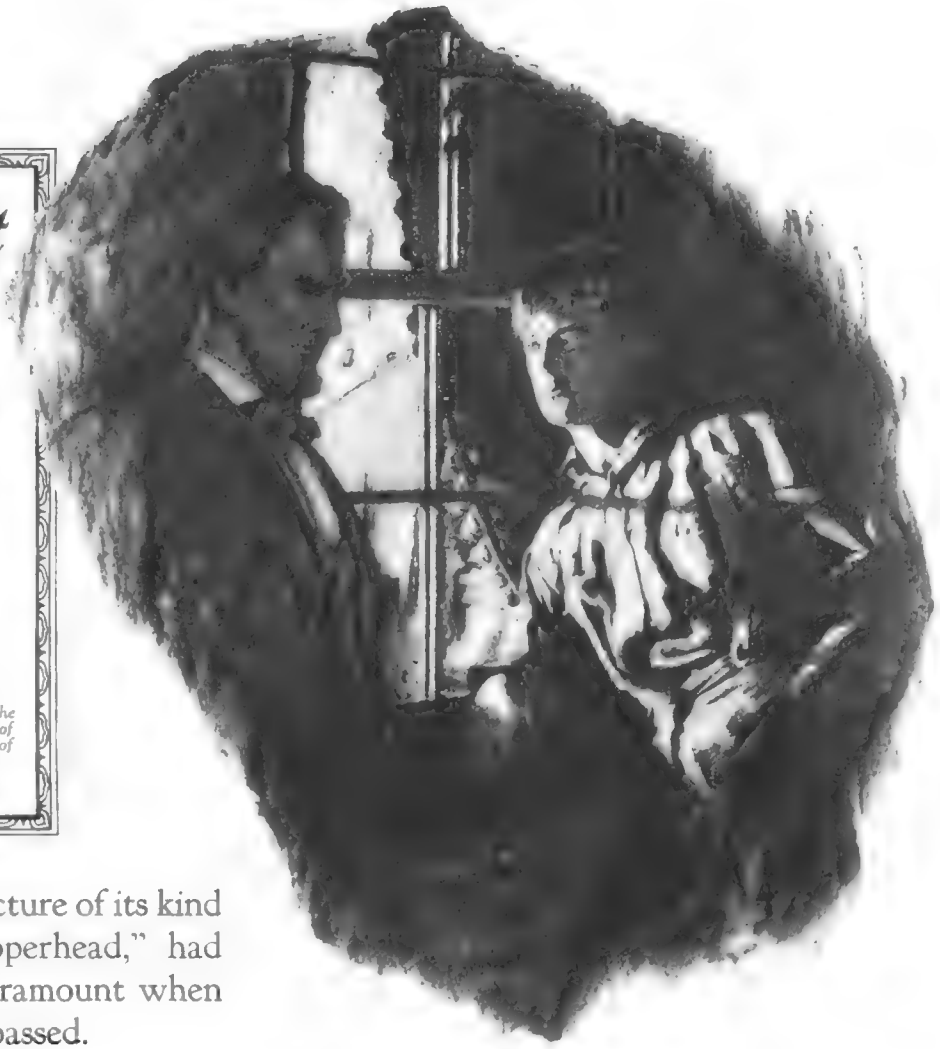
A Government Resolution

"BE it resolved that it is the sense of the Joint Committee on Education of the United States Senate and House of Representatives that the motion picture industry of the United States be requested to do all that is within its power to upbuild and strengthen the spirit of Americanism within our people."

Adopted on Dec. 17, 1910, by the Joint Committee on Education of the U. S. Senate and House of Representatives.



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"You? Martha? The Cow? Why—er—of course! Ha! How you have changed!"

"Same old Cow!" Her liquid laughter burned his ears like molten metal. "Sounds like old times to be called Cow! Nobody's called me that in years. Remember how mad you got at Larry Jones on Commencement Day because he mooed at me during your valedictory? I was clapping my hands too often, like a ninny."

"I've forgotten," Ira blundered. "Oh, er—by the way—my baggage is at the front door. Where shall I tell the man to put it?"

That would surely switch her from the awkward topic of cow!

"Tell him to leave it in the front hall," said she. "I haven't fixed up a room for you yet. Now hurry back. I want to hear all about the wonderful things you've been doing!"

Ira hastened out of her presence, resolving that never again would he allow himself to make a break like that. It worried him, that break did, Why the deuce had he called her the Cow? He never used to, not to her face. And he wasn't in the habit of making breaks. He always managed to say the right thing, with Sophie and Trevision and Burin and the rest. It was strange. Somehow his five years of skill seemed to be slipping from him. It was a sort of reversion to type, or something like that. When in Pillsburg, do as Pillsburgers do.

He saw nothing on his way to the front door. He was lost in a terrible struggle to regain his Presence and Poise. As he admitted the jitney-man he analyzed his confusion. That's the first thing you must do, in stage-fright. If dazed in the presence of the audience, say to yourself: "I am merely standing on plain pine boards slightly elevated above the floor. This elevation enables me to see more faces than if I stood on the floor. There is nothing in that to alarm me. Also, I am about to say a few words to five hundred very ordinary men and women. They must take seriously what I have to say. I need not fear them any more than a field of cabbage. In fact, probably many of them are cabbage-heads." This analysis, if consistently followed through, will banish your embarrassment.

APPLYING this procedure to the present situation, Ira saw the light. He had come expecting to see a Cow, and he had found a most agreeable young woman. That was shock Number 1. The next minute he had discovered that this agreeable young woman was really a Cow. Shock Number 2. He couldn't adjust himself offhand to this metamorphosis. But now it was different. Understanding it all, he could proceed to talk with her and deal with her with presence and poise. The young woman was Martha Mattison, Cow. Though her comeliness had increased amazingly in these five years, she was still Martha. Well and good! He would deal with her as Martha!

His mind cleared, he started back to chat with her. His path ran first through the dining-room. And here a fresh and totally unexpected shock sent a quiver through body and spirit.

A tiny deal table with one disjointed leg stood shakily in the center of the room. Its surface was covered with a mustard-yellow oilcloth. Three kitchen chairs stood against the walls. One was painted a ghastly muddy green—apparently with a brush that had long done duty in a pail of brown paint and had not been properly cleansed for the chair-decorating job. But Ira scarcely noticed the chairs. It was the wall behind them that shackled his gaze in a bondage of horror. There, on the innocent and aged plaster that Great-grandfather Cummins had personally troweled and smoothed, gleamed the very same impossible wall-paper that the orator had marveled at in boyhood days—a pink sea swarming with a squirmy. green fish that twisted in and out among wriggly vertical lines intended to symbolize seaweed. The pink of this sea was now little more than a memory. Ira might have forgiven it; he might have even forgiven those squirmy denizens of its faded waters, but for that appalling patch beside the door leading into the front hall.

THERE, where the pink sea had been torn off or worn off in the course of years, some loathsome wretch, some color-blind, art-blind lout had pasted a square patch of vivid yellow-and-blue paper, a sunrise over the Beautiful Blue Danube, a saffron castle against a canary sky, and a gentleman, evidently Captain Jinks of the Horse-marines, strolling beside the Prussian blue stream, one arm around a Colonial yellow damsel of the bluest blood.

Ira considered the deal table and its game leg. He considered the three chairs. He reconsidered the walls. He then thought of the nook at Berrillon's, of the mahogany tables in Trevison's apartment, of the tapestried walls in the restaurant, and the chaste, even severe sweep of color on Trevison's walls. He visioned Sophie, Trevison and Burin sitting around that rickety deal table, crowded elbow to elbow. Sophie, the glorious Woman of Destiny. Trevison, multimillionaire accustomed to the best of everything. Burin with his wolf eyes cynically appraising every detail—

"Lordy! And they'll get here the day after to-morrow!" He clapped an icy hand to a glacial brow. "I ought to have put them off—this horror must be fixed—no matter what it costs."

Again he stared around. This time he marked on the south wall a battered alarm-clock suspended from a heavy nail, and recording 2:15 at sundown. He drew a deep breath. Perhaps he had spoken a little too freely about his country estate. Some of his casual statements, indeed, might be difficult to reconcile with the facts. If he didn't reconcile them something unpleasant might ensue. He didn't know what, but he was painfully aware of many distressing possibilities.

"I'd better look around," he muttered, "And make a list of what's got to be done to-morrow, to make the place presentable."

He returned to the front hall. His heels boomed over the bare floor of old-fashioned hand-hewn oaken planks. He entered the big front parlor where his grandmother used to sew on winter afternoons when the church ladies came to call. All the shades were drawn. The darkness was thick, and the close air charged with an unnatural pungent odor that almost gagged the young man, as he groped toward a window to fling it open. To his horror, he could not raise a shade. Striking a match, he discovered that the shades consisted of old grain bags tacked everlastingly to the window-frames. Match after match he lighted, and explored the room. And with each match, a fresh horror. There yawned the grand old fireplace of yore, but its wooden mantel hideously scorched, where some fool had allowed a burning log to lie too far forward on the andirons. The far corner, afore-time occupied by grandma's queer ebony spinnet, was now heaped to the ceiling with small packing-boxes, each bearing the stenciled inscription: "Little Marvel Spavin Cure. 1 doz. large." The door leading into the small parlor adjoining was minus its old brass knob; it was fastened with a common iron hook, and—oh, abominable sight!—its lower corner was gnawed through by a rat.

As he stood paralyzed, Martha came into the front hall carrying a small kerosene lamp. Ira blinked at the quaint luminary in deeper and deeper despair. Kerosene lamps! He'd forgotten there were such things in the world. How would Sophie look carrying a kerosene lamp up-stairs to light her way to bed and sweet dreams? How would Trevison?"

"Are—are all the rooms like this one?" he gasped at Martha.

"Oh my, no!" She smiled across the ruddy lamplight at him, and her comeliness took on a borrowed rose that was fair to see. "We keep the little parlor for family use. It's nice, don't you think?" And she opened a door and gestured him in.

He saw a cozy room, a fireplace aglow with shiny red bricks and brass andirons, some deep armchairs beside a gaudy chintz-covered window-seat, a funny ancestral what-not loaded with shiny sea-shells, daguerreotypes, and a glass dome containing mineral specimens. Everything was clean and well placed.

"THAT looks homey!" Ira exclaimed. "If only the rest of the house were like that!"

"Oh!" Martha laughed. "You wouldn't say that if you had to sweep and dust and scrub! I've quite enough to look after in the three rooms we use——"

"Three rooms!" Ira muttered, and he felt his Presence and Poise slipping again into the abyss.

"Yes, this one, the dining-room, and Uncle Ezra's up-stairs." She set the lamp down on a table and began to look him over carefully, placidly. "To-night we'll have to double you up with Uncle Ezra. Take your baggage up there—it's the end room, the one at the east."

Up-stairs he marched past three vast barren bedrooms, black holes magnified by the darkness. Martha called out that at the end of the hall he'd find a table with a candle on it. He lighted the antediluvian device, and peered again into those great voids. In one of them were piled a score of those same Little Marvel Spavin Cure boxes he had stumbled upon down-stairs. And the pungent odor again assailed his nostrils. Why should even a horse-trader have so much Spavin Cure around? And, good Heavens! Would they be able to breeze that penetrating smell out of the house before Sophie and Trevison arrived?

He marched into Uncle Ezra's room. The wavering candle-light fell upon grandma's enormous black-walnut bed and its drapery of mosquito netting. On the wall at the foot of the bed hung five newspaper clippings; the five most sensational

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illustrated accounts of the adventures of the young Bolshevik, Ira M. Cummins, with the New York police. "Brilliant Red Orator Baffles Cop." "Wild Scene in Court." "New Union Square Agitator Outwits Judge."

Ira felt distinctly better. "Good old uncle!" he smiled. "He's impressed!"

The orator looked around the room for more pleasant surprises. He next came upon a worsted motto above the door: "Lips That Touch Liquor Shall Never Touch Mine." On a maple dresser, whose veneer had flaked off here and there, he discovered four celluloid collars of a size that made him gasp and feel his own frail tendon of a neck. With awe he held the candle close to them and read the number. Good Heavens! Number 18! The neck of a beast! No spiritual person could possibly have such a nexus of flesh between brain and body. No wonder Uncle Ezra had remained a poor farmer all his life!

Thrust into the edge of the dresser mirror was a card certifying that Ezra Cummins was a member of the Pillsburg Anti-Saloon League. Somehow these exhibits could not hold Ira's thoughts. His gaze wandered back to those collars, and he mused mournfully: "I wonder—when I'm sixty years old, perhaps I'll wear a Number 14, if I take care of my diet and don't worry too much."

EXPLORING further, he found a rickety bookcase: "Pilgrim's Progress," "How to Feed Hogs," "History of the Populist Party," "Ten Nights in a Bar Room," "List of Repair Parts of the McGinnis Thresher," "Ayres' Hymn Book," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "One Hundred Farm Swindles and How to Know Them," "Investor's Guide," "The Frauds of Wall Street," "Tennyson's Poems," "Perkins' High School Arithmetic," "Annual Reports, U. S. Department of Agriculture."

"Good Lord!" Ira scratched his head. "He reads any old thing that falls into his hands. They say farmers are the easiest victims of book agents."

His eye caught the bottom shelf. It was stacked with thin green pamphlets, on whose cover were these words: "Little Marvel Spavin Cure. Read & Be Convinced."

"By George! I believe he's an agent for the stuff!" Ira gagged. The thought distressed him even more than the pungent smell did. It began to look as if there might be certain intimate difficulties in living under the same roof with Uncle Ezra, according to the stipulations in his letter. He had said explicitly, of course, that he wished to occupy only one room in the house after Ira took possession; but he hadn't mentioned that this accursed Spavin Cure might continue to occupy the entire dwelling with its pungency.

Ira felt that it might be unfair to ask the good old soul to give up selling the stuff. Ezra must have been alluding to the Spavin Cure when he remarked, in his letter, that he was easing up on farm work because he had some "Outside business." Well, if this horse medicine were what he was relying on to see him safely through his old age, Ira would be a monster of ingratitude if he tried to compel him to give up the agency. Poor old chap! He deserved kindness and sympathy.

Hadn't he been struggling all his long life to make ends meet? Hadn't his lot been the hard, toilsome one of the ordinary small farmer? He had a home, to be sure; but probably most of the time a heavy mortgage had been nailed down on to the roof. And here he was, fast approaching the Dusk of Life, living in three rooms of a huge bare house, and slaving away fourteen hours a day, as most farmers do.

"His fate is the fate of the common people," Ira nodded mournfully. "And it is my sacred duty to lighten the burden of his declining days. Perhaps I can arrange to build a shed for him to keep the Spavin Cure in. He's been very good to me. I can be good to him."

Ezra was good. He recalled hearing the minister say years ago: "Ezra Cummins's morals will never spoil. He keeps them in cold storage."

And then that oft-quoted remark of Ed Sykes's, the Pillsburg wit: "When Ezra reaches the Golden Gate, he'll talk Saint Peter into swapping the gate hinges for Ezra's next year's colts. And while Peter is unscrewing the hinges, Ezra'll walk into New Jerusalem, singing as usual."

A shrewd, unlettered countryman! Full of odd backwoods notions that might make it awkward at times, especially when prominent leaders of the Second American Revolution foregathered to confer on affairs of state. Ezra would not understand their conversation. And if he insisted on eating at the same table with them, this might lead to painful situations. Doubtless Martha could persuade him to eat with her, out in the kitchen. Again, he might——

A terrific tumult below shattered this chain of reflections. Deep-throated dogs barked a chorus of welcome. A door banged. A heavy boot thumped across a hard floor, and then a fog-horn bellowed: "What? He here already? By gravy! That's great! Hey you, Ira! Where are ye?"

The roar swept up the staircase and reverberated against the bare wooden floors. It might have been a bull, practising voice culture in Mammoth Cave with a megaphone—but it wasn't. It was the voice Ira had heard many a time in church, ripping out the old hymns.

XIII

The Dictator cunningly inveigles his Rube Uncle into toiling for the Revolution.

THE leader of the Second American Revolution sped down-stairs and fell into his uncle's arms, while Martha, in the background with kerosene lamp, laughed placidly as the old codger tossed his nephew in the air and whooped: "Now ain't this a sight for sore eyes?"

Ira hadn't traveled in the air that way since the old, old days, when he used to jump off the cross-beams of the hay-barn into the timothy. He was too mature to enjoy it now. It made him seasick. It was awful.

Ezra turned him full into the lamplight, and while he took Ira in, Ira returned the compliment. Same old uncle! Still the same slight touch of winter in his odd, curly hair. Still the same ape-like grip of hands. Same rough-hewn head atop a hairy neck that even the Number 18 collar barely encircled. Same blue left eye and

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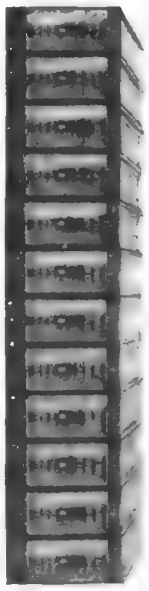

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mottled right eye, kindly orbs, but as illegible as a word written in water. Same drum-tight lips and hard, knobbed chin that finished off the most famous poker face around Pillsburg. Those lips sent Ira's thoughts once again back into the remote past; and he heard fellows in the post-office lobby chuckling: "You might as well guess next year's weather by looking at a rusty weather-vane as to guess Ezra's thought from his front. His mind's a star-chamber."

Even that wide-brimmed gray hat was the same, but spattered with strange reddish spots. From underneath his celluloid collar a loathsome pink tie flaunted its frayed edges indecently. As he contemplated his nephew with pride, he unbuttoned his coat and laid bare a fancy vest that made even the dining-room wallpaper of awful memory seem a work of art. Ira fixed his eyes on it, as a little bird looks at a snake, in a hypnosis of horror. It was a light-gray nightmare across which pranced bright red horses, each about an inch tall, and each carrying a blue jockey who wielded a gilt whip.

"Boy, you ain't the only fancy dresser in this here family," Ezra chuckled as he noted Ira's look. "I took to wearing nice vests the year I ran for Congress. That's how I come to get eighteen votes instead of four or five. I figure that every man, to keep sane, ought to have one or two little weaknesses. This here vest is the one I wear to auctions. I find it mighty useful as well as ornamental. When I'm buying a horse, I open up my coat; and when I'm selling, I button it up tight."

Ira groped vainly for some meaning in it. What could buttoning or unbuttoning one's coat do in a horse sale, anyhow? He found no time to solve the mystery. Ezra went booming on.

"So our Family Skeleton has been walloping the big pirates down in Wall Street!" He held Ira at arm's length. "Fooled his old uncle, didn't he, Martha?"

"Just as I said he would, Ezra!" Martha flushed happily. "He only needed time."

"You're the only one who understood him from the start, girl." Ezra surveyed the orator. "Lordy! Don't I wish I'd been a yellowcutionist back in 1888! I'd have been sent to Congress, sure pop!"

Ira shuddered at that loathsome word, yellowcutionist. What if the old fool were to use it before the Beloved and Trevison? Ugh! But even that wouldn't be half as bad as those bare cracked walls and the unspeakable decorations. To save himself from disgrace he must get the whole house fixed up at once—cost what it might!

"UNCLE," he spoke firmly, "I am grateful for that offer you made me. I've come to take you up on it right away——"

"You are mighty prompt, boy," Ezra grinned. "I like promptness. It shows you've got an executive mind."

"There are reasons for promptness." Ira followed through his stroke deftly. "I have just launched a nation-wide movement against plutocracy. Or rather an international movement——"

"Bully, boy!" Ezra slapped his elephantine thigh. "Hear that, Martha? International—wow!"

"And here," Ira seized the golden chance, "here in this old Cummins homestead, dear uncle, we shall have the Mount Vernon of the Second American Revolution, the——"

"Hold on, boy! You think too fast for me," Ezra laughed. "What do you propose to do with this house?"

"I propose to make it the world headquarters of my great campaign to emancipate the common people from plutocracy," Ira asserted. And he then proceeded to fill in details.

Ezra listened raptly. He even stopped chewing his licorice root. When Ira paused, the old fellow shook his head sorrowfully.

"That's a bully idea," said he. "But it'll cost too much money. Why, boy, what do you think it cost me to run for Congress—just printing and hall hire and such like along? A hundred and eighty dollars! Cash, too! You're dreaming too lively, Ira. A national campaign would cost thousands——"

"I ought to add—" Ira pulled himself together for his terrific climax of revelations—"that I have already half a million dollars' worth of advertising. On my Arrangements Committee in New York is Mr. Ivan Morgolsky, who represents the Moscow Soviet—and is financed by them. My assistant secretary is Mr. Albert Trevison, of West Virginia, whose personal fortune is estimated at eight million dollars. Among my active workers are Annabel Hicks, of White Plains, daughter of the Hicks who builds torpedo boats; also Helen McVittle, who inherited three million from her grandfather last year. As for getting the work under way, I have no doubt this little will suffice for a few weeks." And with these last words the consummate master of rhetorical suspense flashed his new bank-book.

EZRA peered at the figures in the book with a poker face. Not a muscle in his giant frame moved. That irritated Ira. He was not accustomed to seeing his well-staged climaxes fall flat. Only an instant before his uncle was so enthusiastic, to the point of hilarity. And now he had become as apathetic as an aged rhinoceros. Ira rallied for a supreme effort. He drew forth his roll of bills that Trevison had turned over to him at Berrillon's, and with theatrical deliberation whipped off the elastic and spread the yellow boys on his uncle's knee.

"In case you need a little ready cash for immediate improvements," he remarked casually, "we can draw on this pocket money. Don't you think we can get under way—modestly?"

Uncle Ezra contemplated the yellow boys as he might have regarded a bobtail flush. He made no sign nor sound for a long and agonizing minute. Then he shook his head. "I don't understand this. Why should these plutocrats give money for our Cause? They're just joining a suicide club, Ira. We want to wipe out the plutocrats, don't we? Well, then——"

"I see." Ira smiled wisely. "But you must remember, uncle, that some rich people have had their eyes opened to the evils of money. Furthermore—" he straightened up—"I have personally talked them into supporting my cause. Elocution, you know, is a power!"

"You mean to tell me," Ezra chafed his knobby chin, "that you argued these rich folks into handing over this money?"

"I mean just that," Ira rapped his uncle's knee. "And I've done more.

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"Hooks and crooks!" Ezra shook his head. "Martha, just see what this little wizard has done with the three hundred dollars you lent him to go to New York with! Why, the boy's a downright genius! And you made him, Martha! You had a real hunch about him."

"Now the first thing we've got to do is to fix up this house." Ira spoke rapidly. He did not care to linger over that reminiscence of Martha's loan. "These big New York people have to have things different from country folks."

"You're right!" Ezra nodded. "You're a different sort from us, Ira. I couldn't have done what you've done in a thousand years! But I'm willing to do what I can for the Cause. You've got me all excited——"

"Fine!" Ira hurrahed. "That's the spirit I like to see!"

"I've been a generation too early for all the big things." Ezra grew moody. "In politics and farming and everything, haven't I, Martha? I came thirty years too soon for these here farm tractors and such like machines. All I know is horses. And these new chemical fertilizers—I never did get the hang of them. But, boy, I want to do my mite for the Cause. You've got something big on the way. I want to lend a hand. It'll make me ten years younger——"

"Bully!" Ira gleamed. "Now suppose you begin by putting this house in shape——"

"Fine!" Ezra hopped to his feet, and started Ira and Martha toward the kitchen. "Let's get grub moving, boys and girls! And we'll go into this business while we cook. Now, Ira, I'll go ahead and fix up Headquarters——"

"You'll have to hurry. I expect a—er—delegation Saturday."

"Saturday?" Ezra started. "That's fast moving! Your business manager'll have to get a hump on himself——"

"I haven't appointed a business manager yet, by George!" Ira exclaimed.

"My boy," Ezra shook his head, "that's risky! You must get all these details of business off your mind. It'll upset you if you plan your campaign and see delegations and all that while you're looking after plumbers and painters and checking their work, and adding up their bills to see they don't overcharge, and all that——"

"Of course, I have——"

"Now I've found my humble place in this big movement." Ezra smiled. "I'm used to that kind of pottering work, boy. I can't make speeches, but I can hound plumbers, and add straight, and I know white-lead paint from fake stuff. I apply right here for the job of business manager. What do you say, Ira?"

ONLY years of drill in Presence and Poise prevented Ira from laughing. The old codger was waking of his own accord straight in the direction Ira had supposed he would have to urge him. Obviously a handy man was going to be sorely neededat once. And who could be more convenient than good old Ezra? Yes! Destiny was still sitting up nights, working for the Emancipator of Mankind.

"I appoint you Business Manager of the Cause," Ira laughed happily. "And you'd better get on the job as soon as you've had supper. That dining-room simply must be repapered before Saturday morning. We must put furniture in all the bedrooms. We must——"

"Look here!" Ezra broke in excitedly. "Martha knows every nook and corner of this house, and what it needs. Now, after grub she'll go from cellar to garret and check up. And your new business manager will hustle down to the village and get things moving to-night."

"That's the way to talk," said Ira.

"If we're fixing this place up to be a National Headquarters," Ezra mused as he led the way to the kitchen, "we've got to do it with finish and dignity, ain't we, Ira? Nothing cheap or shoddy! As you say, a sort of Mount Vernon of the Second American Revolution."

"That's exactly the idea," Ira yawned. Now that the victory was won and he relaxed mentally, the weariness of the long day's work and train ride laid hold of him.

"Oh, Mount Vernon!" Martha clapped her hands. "You really mean to fix this dear old house up like Mount Vernon, Ira? You've got such taste! Oh, I've a book up-stairs full of pictures of Mount Vernon. We can take it down to the furniture store and the wall-paper man and show them just what we want. I've dreamed so many times about making this place pretty—but dear me, I never, never, dreamed it would come true!"

AS she stood beside the long kitchen sink, her strong white hands clasped in sudden joy and her red lips parted, the spell of the old room fell upon Ira. Beside her, the old stone crock from which Ira used to steal gingersnaps; behind her, on hand-beaten iron hooks, the burnished copper pots and pans that had gleamed there for more than seventy years; at her left, the immense old wood range on which grandma used to make a kettle of molasses taffy for the church socials. In the young man's drowsing vision the girl became the spirit of grandmother, great-grandmother, great - great - grandmother Cummins—the feminine soul of the Cummins family. A pleasant, wholesome picture!

"Martha," remarked Ezra, as he fished about in an enormous ice-box, "he ain't thinking of the nice looks of it so much as he is thinking of making the place efficient. He's got to have things fixed up to get big results. Ain't that the idea, Ira?"

"Yes, indeed!" Ira stifled a deeper yawn. And then his eye followed Martha as she bustled about the kitchen.

"The bigger the business, the bigger the headquarters," Ezra ambled on. "Take me, for instance. I'm nobody. So I've gotten along in three rooms. But the United States Headquarters fills almost the whole city of Washington. Simply enormous!—White House, Treasury, Agricultural Department, Pension Building—why there must be a hundred blocks of headquarters there, boy! Some folks don't understand why so much headquarters is needed. I've heard them howl about excessive overhead. I've heard them say that all overhead is underhand. Ha, ha! But it ain't so——"

Ira's lids drooped. His uncle's ruminations reached him only as a deep drone,

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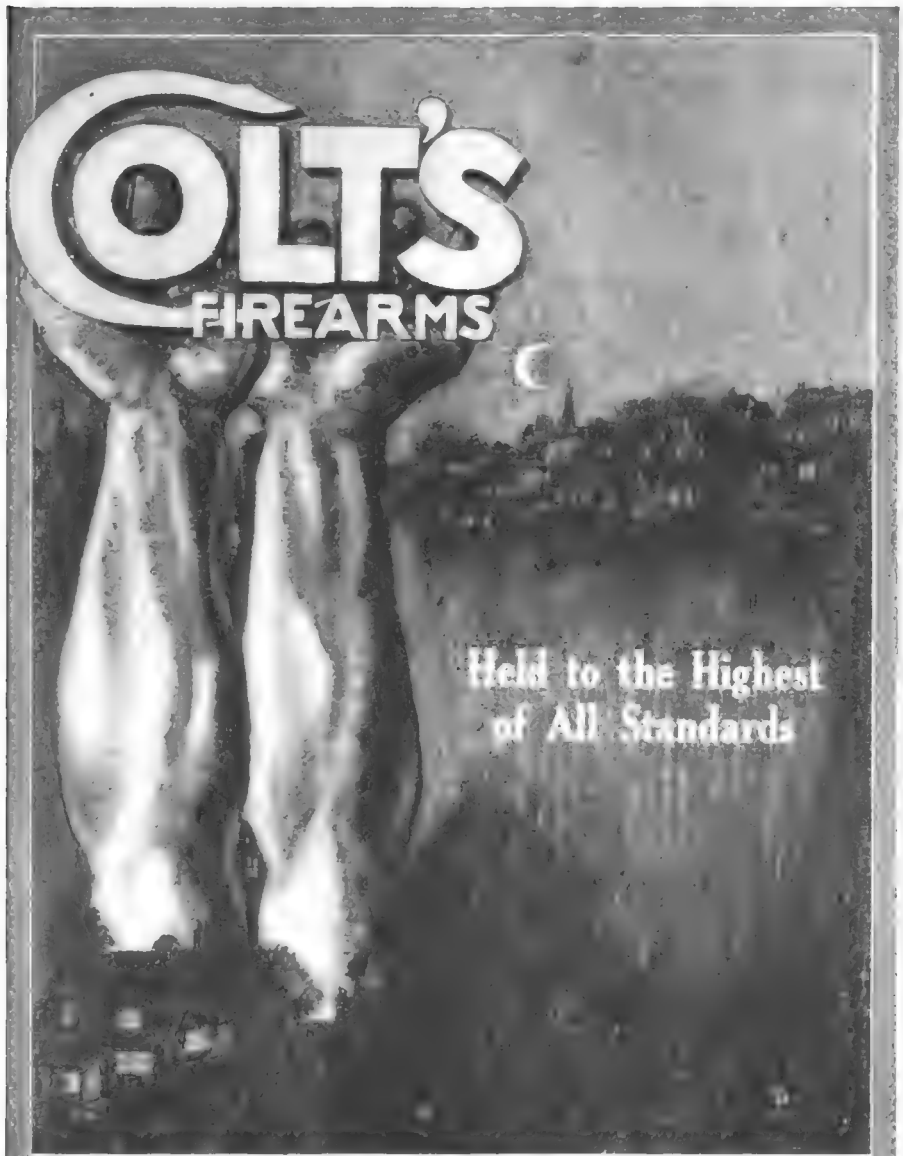

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punctuated by the clatter of Martha's pots and pans and by pleasant odors. How long Ezra ambled on he never knew, nor cared. But at last Martha sang out: "Well, supper's ready. Let's eat right here in the kitchen. It'll save lugging dishes in and out, won't it?"

They pulled up around the big kitchen-table and confronted a beautiful lake of creamed chicken, a monstrous platter of fried eggs framed in a gold halo of sizzling fried potatoes; a mountain of crisp home-baked bread flanked with plates of butter, a chipped bowl brimming with grape jelly, and a towering pitcher of milk. For a few minutes Ira was as wide awake as a rooster at sunrise. That creamed chicken! How could anybody drowse in its presence! Set it down in any graveyard and Resurrection Day would arrive without waiting for Gabriel and his trump. Martha, too, had been picked by destiny! What a cook! Consider that bread! No eminent statesman would ever scorn that loaf. Indeed, it might even play a part in converting dissenters to the Cause. Even the Cow was ordained to play her modest part in the Second American Revolution. Solid comforting food, this rustic diet! Builds a man up. Gives him energy for great deeds. Very important for a leader to be fed properly. He ought to be under a physical trainer like a great athlete. Might even outgrow those disgraceful collars. Then he could marry the Woman of Destiny without humiliation. Horrible for a nice girl to wed what she supposed was a man, only to find a family skeleton——

"Here's to the success of the Common People and their leader!"

Ira jerked his head with a painful snap. Ezra was grinning at him across the rim of a glass of cream. The leader groggily lifted his glass and drank to the toast.

"Sleepy, eh?" His uncle wagged his head. "Well, toddle along to bed, boy. Martha, hitch up Sally, will you, while I'm fetching up a couple of cases of Little Marvel. Got to run to town with them. You be looking the house over to see what we need for Headquarters. I'll get back with some men around nine o'clock."

Ira mumbled good night and dragged his leaden feet to Ezra's pungent room. He did not spray his pipe-organ throat. He did not even suck a lozenge nor exhale the vowels. He pulled off his exquisite raiment and tumbled into a bed of dreams.

The next instalment of ***"Dictated—But Not Red"*** *will appear in the April number.*

Doris at Sixteen

By Mary Stewart Cutting

A WONDER-DAY, so sweet!
Soon, soon is coming,
With joy my soul to greet
Beyond all summing.

What are these words I keep
Still, still repeating—
Whence are these thoughts that sleep
In my heart's beating?

Oh, in this strange, new tongue
I'm but a lisper!
Hark—from yon shadows flung,
Was *that* Love's whisper?

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MARY WOLLASTON

(*Continued from page 58*)

not coming at all she filled him with terror lest she had gone for good—would not come back even when he was ready for her. When that panic was upon him, he hated Paula with a devouring hatred.

Of the human original of his blue-eyed princess he saw during those weeks nothing. On that first Sunday when he lunched at the house he heard them speak of a member of the family, a daughter of John Wollaston's named Mary, who had been living in New York, and had recently returned but was not lunching at home that day. He got the idea then that she might be the girl who had so mysteriously come in and sat beside him while Paula sang; and without any evidence whatever to support this surmise, it became a settled conviction. But an odd shrinking, almost superstition, as he had confessed to Jennie, from doing anything that might break the spell kept him from asking any questions.

During the first week of his almost daily visits to the house he got repeated intimations of her, a glimpse once through an open door on the third floor into a room that struck him as being probably hers. The impression once more when he was coming down from the music-room that this was the door which he had just heard softly shut as if some one, the princess herself, of course, who had stood listening to the music for a while, had withdrawn there when she heard his step on the stairs. Once on the settle in the hall he saw a riding-crop and a small beaver hat that he felt a curious certainty belonged to her, and once out of a confusion of young voices in the drawing-room and a dance-tune going on the victrola he heard some one call out her name, but didn't hear her answer. Perhaps she had answered without speaking. The dumb princess again.

Then suddenly even these faint hints of her presence ceased, and he remarked their absence with a troubled wonder until one day Paula volunteered the statement that Mary had gone away on a visit, out to Wyoming, where a great friend of hers, Olive Corbett, and her husband had a ranch.

BY ASKING a few intelligent questions he could have found out a lot more from Paula, for she was disposed to talk freely enough about the family life she was so oddly enclosed in, and his perpetual quarrels with her over the opera never carried over into their breathing-spells. During these occasional respites they always got on in the comfortably amicable vein they had set out in the day he tuned her piano. In the long hours of their almost daily sessions these occasional rests made up quite a total, and March accumulated a lot of information about Paula herself as well as about the family she had married into.

Indeed it was not quite as idle as that sounds. Paula talked to him thirstily, gave him somehow the impression that she had had no one for a good many years with whom she could converse without reservation in her own idiom. She had recognized him on the very first day as a bird of her own feather. Of that he had at the time been aware. Now he gathered that he was the only one in a good long while that she had had an opportunity to flock with.

She came, he learned, of a Virginia family which had migrated during her early childhood to California. It was obvious that they were well bred, but equally so that they were not very competent—the victims, he judged, of a lot of played-out Southern ideas and traditions. They were still living and March allowed himself to guess that they were one of the minor reasons why Doctor John had to earn a lot of money.

Paula with her splendid physique and gorgeous voice must have looked to them like the family hope. They had managed at considerable sacrifice to send her abroad, but evidently without any idea of the time and the money it takes to erect even the most promising material into a genuine success. After a year or two, she had been abandoned to make her way as best she could.

EVEN now that they were safely consigned to the past, Paula could not talk about the shifts and hardships of that time with any relish. The discouragements must have sunk in pretty deep. She hinted—it was not the sort of topic she could discourse candidly about—that the blackest of those discouragements had come from the amorous advances of men who had it in their power to open opportunities to her, but wanted a *quid pro quo*.

He asked her in that connection whether during those hard times she had never felt inclined to fall in love on her own account.

"I never cared a snap of my fingers for any man," she said with obvious sincerity, "until I saw John."

This slowness of her erotic development surprised him rather until he evoked the explanation that her energies had been focused completely upon her musical ambition. Music, since she was a real musician, had been a genuine emotional outlet for her.

March speculated rather actively upon the relation between Paula and her husband. There was no dark room in the composer's mind. He was the other pole from Aunt Lucile. All human problems set his mind at work. He was not widely read on the literature of psychology, and he had a rough working theory which he regarded as his own, a dynamic theory. People got started off in life with a certain amount of energy. It varied immensely between individuals, of course, but one couldn't alter the total of his own. Upon that store you ran until you were spent. What channels this stream of energy cut for itself was partly a matter of luck, partly one of self-determination. The important fact was that there was only so much, and that what went down one way did not also go down another. It might be a hundred rivulets or one river, it couldn't be both. This philosophy was largely responsible for the ordering of his own life, for his doing without possessions, for the most part without friends, for his keeping of the brake set so tightly upon his sex impulses.

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John must have come into Paula's life, he reflected, at a time when the musical outlet to her energies had been dammed up. Her main stream, like that of the Mississippi, had cut a new channel for itself.

Had there been, he wondered, some similar obstruction in the main channel of John Wollaston's emotional life? Anyhow there was no doubt that for the five years since this cataclysm had occurred the course of true love had run smooth and deep. But suppose now that through La Chaise's intervention, Paula's musical career were again opened to her, would the current turn that way? Would John be left stranded? Had Paula herself any misgivings to that effect?

That she was deeply troubled about her present relation with John and in general about John himself would have been plain to a less penetrating eye than Anthony's. There was no open quarrel between them. Wollaston dropped into the music-room sometimes, late in the afternoon, to ask how the opera was getting along. His manner to March on these occasions was one of, perhaps, slightly overwrought politeness, but the intention of it did not seem hostile. Toward Paula he presented the image of humorous, affectionate concern, the standard behavior of the perfect husband.

It was Paula, on these occasions, who gave the show away, betraying, by a self-conscious eagerness to make him welcome, the fact that he was not. She made the mistake of telling him he looked tired and worried, facts too glaringly true to be bandied about in the presence of a stranger. He looked to March as if he were approaching the elastic limit of complete exhaustion. That it looked pretty much like that to Paula herself was made evident from the way she once spoke about him, her eyes full of tears, after he had left the room.

"He's working so insanely hard," she said. "Nights as well as days. I don't believe he's had five hours' consecutive sleep this week."

When March wanted to know why he did it, she hesitated.

"I think it's partly because he feels he has to," she said. "To earn the money, I mean. He never tells me anything about it, but I know he's been buying a big farm, half of it, for Rush and that that's only the beginning of what he's going to have to put into it. And I guess we're a pretty expensive family, too," she concluded. "Of course in a way he's rich. He always used to seem like a perfect millionaire, and he can't be really worried about that. He said the other day that if I needed any extra money for this—" she nodded toward the score on the piano—"I was to let him know. Of course he isn't happy about it, and I suppose it makes him take things harder."

Naturally enough March agreed with her here. John Wollaston was clearly a member of the Gold Coast class. It wasn't thinkable that his financial difficulties could be real. The unreality of them was, of course, the measure of the genuineness of his fear of losing Paula—of seeing the main current of her life shift once more to its old channel. Did Paula see that, March wondered? What was it she foresaw?

He got unexpectedly a partial answer one day in the course of one of their quarrels about the opera. He had unguardedly given expression to his growing despondency about it.

"This thing can't go," he had said. "It's getting more lifeless from week to week. We're draining all the blood out of it and this stuff we're putting in instead is sawdust."

She whipped round upon him in a sudden tempest. "It's got to go," she said. "It's got to be made to go. If what you're putting into it is sawdust, take it out. Put some heart into it."

He had been staring gloomily at the score. Now he turned from it. "That's what I don't seem to be able to do," he said.

SHE came up and took him by the shoulders so violently that it might almost be said she shook him. "You can't let go like that. It's too late. Everything I've got in the world is mixed up in it." She must have read his unspoken thought there, for she went on: "Oh, I suppose you'd say I'd still have John if I did fail. Well, I wouldn't. He's mixed up in it, too. He'd never forgive me if I failed. It's the fear I'll fail and make myself look cheap and ridiculous that makes him hate it so. Well, I'm not going to. Make up your mind to that!"

A little later, when he was leaving, under a promise to improve some of the passages they had been arguing about, she reverted to this aspect of the matter and added something. "John can see what a failure would mean," she said. "But what the other thing—the big real success—would mean to both of us he hasn't the faintest idea of. He won't till I get it."

"He's a famous person himself, of course," March observed, not without a gleam of mischief.

She echoed the word quite blankly, and he went on to amplify:

"That European Medical Commission that was out here a few weeks ago attended some of his clinics in a body. I don't suppose there's a first-class hospital anywhere in this country or in Europe where his name isn't known. That operation he did on Sarah turned out to be a classic, I believe. He used a new technique in it which has become standard since."

But it seemed to him that she still looked incredulous when he went away, incapable of readily digesting that idea at all. No, he wouldn't have bet much on the chance that any great success of hers could reunite them. The love life that they had been enjoying this past five years hadn't thrown out any radicles to bind them together—children, for instance.

He wondered why there had been no children. He was not inclined to accept the first explanation that came to hand, namely, that she hadn't wanted any. She had spoken once of her childlessness in a tone that didn't quite square with that explanation. Nor had she said it quite as she would had she felt that her husband shared equally in her disappointment. It was all very intangible, of course, just the way she inflected the sentence. "You see, I haven't any children." Was it John that didn't want them? Well, he had two of his own, of course. Had he shrunk from having this new passion of his domesticated? And then he was a gynecologist. Was he, perhaps, afraid for her? That explanation had a sort of plausibility about it for Anthony March. If that were true,

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his caution had only brought him face to face with a greater risk. March felt sorry for John Wollaston.

But it quite truly never occurred to him to hold himself in the smallest degree responsible for the husband's troubles. To a man with a better-developed possessive sense it might have occurred that he was poaching in another's preserves. When a husband made it plain that he chose to keep a particularly rare and valuable possession, such as a wife like Paula must be considered, in the tower of brass La Chaise had talked about, it became the duty of every other well-disposed male to take pains to leave no keys, rope-ladders or files lying about by which she might effect her escape. But a consideration of this sort would not even have been intelligible to March, let alone troublesome.

CHAPTER TEN
An Intervention

MARY could not have described the thing there was about old Nat's manner of going by her door that led her to halt him and inquire what he was up to. One sees sometimes one of his children gliding very innocently along toward the nearest way out, with an effect of held breath that prompts investigation. In this sixty-year-old child, upon whom the terror of John Wollaston's desperate illness lay more visibly than on any other member of the household, this look of gusto was especially striking. Mary's question was prompted by no more serious an impulse than to share with him a momentary escape from the all-enveloping misery.

But she found old Nat unwilling to share his source of satisfaction with her. He protested, indeed, with an air of deeply aggrieved innocence, that nothing of the sort existed. A man was waiting now in the lower hall who had come to make the customary inquiries. Nat had conveyed them to Paula, and was returning with her answer. This was so flagrantly disingenuous that Mary smiled.

"Who is the man?" she asked.

The old servant shuffled his feet. "It's that good-for-nothing piano-tuner, Miss Mary," he told her reluctantly. "I reckon you don't know much about him. He's been coming around a lot since you've been away. He's been sticking to Miss Paula like a leech, right up to the day your father got sick. Then he didn't come any more and I thought we were done with him. But he came back today as bold as brass and asked me if Miss Paula was up in the music-room. He'd have gone right straight up to that room where Doctor John is fighting for his life if I hadn't stopped him."

"Did you tell him Father was ill?" she asked, and was astonished at the flare of passion this evoked from him.

"It ain't no business of his, Miss Mary," he said grimly. "Nothing about this family is any business of his." Then as if anxious to prevent the significance of that from reaching her, he hurried on. "He was so sure Miss Paula wanted to see him. I told him if he'd wait I'd inform her that he was here. I've been and told her, and she said he was to go away. She couldn't be bothered with him. And then she said to me with tears in her eyes, 'I wish I'd never seen him, Nat.' Those were her words, Miss Mary. 'I wish my eyes had never beheld him!' That's what she said to me not a minute ago. I'm going down to fix him so she'll never see him again."

"You needn't go down," Mary said decisively. "I'll see him myself."

She had got home that morning, summoned by a telegram, one of those carefully composed encouraging telegrams that are a simple distillate of despair. During the three days it had taken to accomplish her journey from the ranch she had gradually relinquished all hope of finding her father alive. Rush, who met the train, had reassured her. It was a bad case of double pneumonia. They were expecting the crisis within twenty-four hours. The doctors gave him an even chance, but the boy was more confident. "They don't know Dad," he said. "He isn't going to die. I'm sure of it."

On the way back to the house he had outlined the facts for her. His father had driven out to the farm in his open roadster a week ago Sunday to see how he and Graham were getting on—driven out alone, though he had spoken the night before, over the phone, of bringing Paula with him. For some reason that hadn't come off, Dad had seemed well enough then, though rather tired and dispirited. The day had begun as if it meant to be fine, for a change, but it had turned off cold again and begun to rain while they were walking over the place. His father, he was afraid, had got pretty wet. When they got back to the farmhouse they found a telephone message urgently summoning him back to town, and he had driven away in the open car without changing.

Rush had meant to telephone, but had neglected this—they were terribly busy, of course, trying to get things done without any labor to do them with. He had come home Wednesday, on a promise to Graham's kid sister that he would attend a school dance of hers. He had dressed at home, but not dined there, and had seen nothing of his father until very late, about two o'clock in the morning, when he noticed a light in his room as he passed on the way to his own.

"I don't know why I stopped," he said. "He was talking and his voice didn't sound natural, not as if he was telephoning or talking to any one in the room either. He was trying to telephone—to the hospital to send an ambulance for him. He hadn't any breath at all, even then, and the thermometer he'd been taking his temperature with read a hundred and four."

"But—the *hospital?*"

"I know," Rush agreed. "It's pretty rum. He stuck to it. Wanted to be got straight out of the house without rousing anybody. He was a little bit delirious, of course. I agreed to it to pacify him, but I telephoned straight to Doctor Darby and he told me not to do anything till he got around. It wasn't more than ten minutes before he came. Paula had got roused up by that time, and she persuaded Darby against the hospital. She suggested the music-room herself, and as soon as he saw it he said it was just the place. They've got a regular hospital rigged up for him there and two men nurses. But the main person on the job is Paula herself. The two men keep watch and watch, but she's there practically all the

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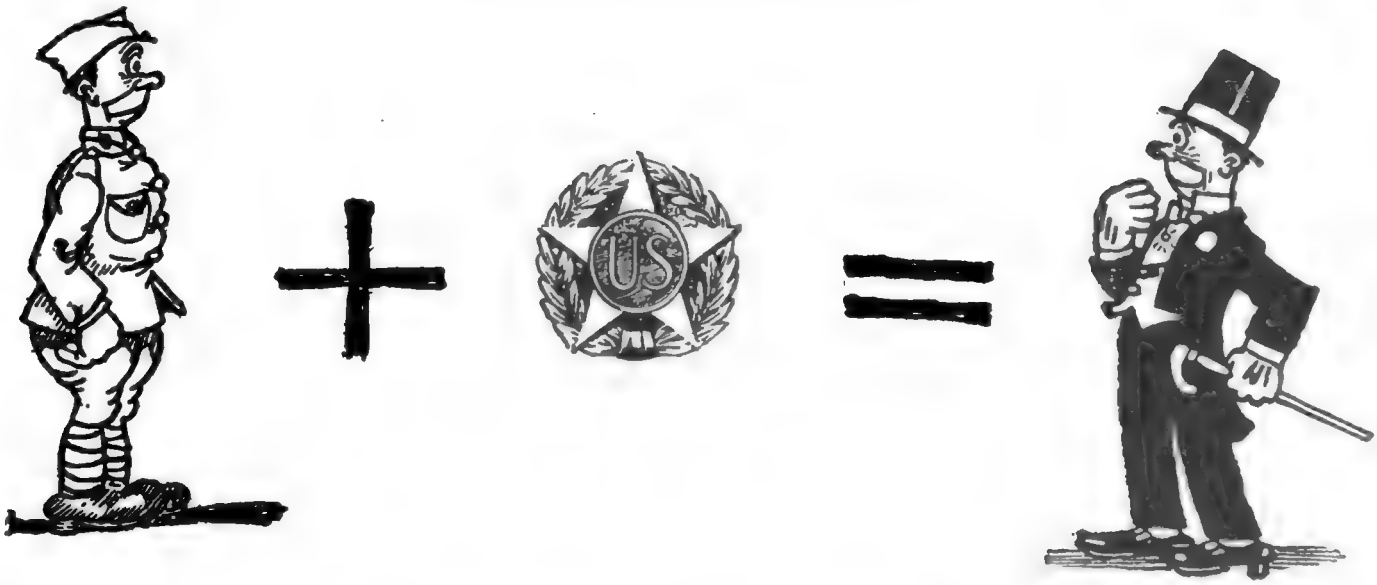

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There wasn't time to explore the meaning of that last remark just then, for they were pulling up at the door as he made it. She laid it aside for future reference, however. She was so fortunate as to meet Doctor Darby on the stairs and so to get at once the latest and most authoritative report.

He brightened up at the sight of her, but she thought he didn't look very hopeful. He said, though, that he believed her father was going to get well. "Medically, he hasn't more than an even chance. He hasn't much fight in him somehow. But that stepmother of yours means to pull him through. She doesn't mean to be beaten, and I don't believe she will. I've never seen the equal of her. It shows they're born, not made. She's never had, your aunt assures me, any nursing experience whatever."

Mary thought she detected a twinkle in Darby's eye over this mention of Aunt Lucile, but it was gone before she could make sure.

"You're to go up and see him for five minutes," he went on. "Paula's keeping a look-out for you. He mustn't be allowed to talk, of course, but she wants him to know you're back. She has an idea, and she's probably right, that he is worrying about you."

"What is there that I can do?" she asked. "To help, I mean."

"Hope," he told her bluntly. "Pray, if you can. Cheer up your aunt a bit, if possible; she's in despair. Only don't try to take away any of her occupations. That's about all."

"In other words, nothing," she commented.

"Well, none of us can do much more than that," he said, "excepting, always, Paula."

It was not until she had spent that heart-tearing five minutes at her father's bedside, while she talked cheerful little encouraging futilities in a voice dry with the effort she had to make to keep it from breaking, that she saw her aunt—and felt grateful for Doctor Darby's warning. Mary had never thought of Lucile before as an old woman, but she seemed more than that now, broken and literally in despair of her brother's life. And beyond this there was a bitterness which she could not at first account for.

"Paula, I hear, has allowed you to see him. For five minutes! Well, that is more than she has allowed me. Or any of us. It was a chance for showing off, I suppose, that was more than she could resist."

"I was a little afraid it might be that," Mary admitted. "Afraid of finding her—carefully costumed for the part, you know. But she wasn't. She didn't come into the room with me at all; just told me not to show I was shocked by the way he looked and not to let him talk. And she seemed glad I was back; not for me, but because it might help him. It seems a miracle that he's still alive, after almost a week of that, and I guess it is she who has done it. They all say so."

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"Men!" the old woman cried fiercely. "All men! The two nurses as well. There's something about her that makes idiots of all of them. She knows it. And she revels in it. It's the breath of life to her. She has played fast and loose with your father's happiness for it. And now she's playing with his life as well. And feeling, all the while, that it is a very noble repentance!"

"Repentance for what?" Mary asked. "Rush said something like that. I thought, before I went away, that father was getting reconciled to the High Forest idea. Do you suppose it was worrying about——"

"No, I don't," Lucile interrupted shortly. "Your father was exposed, soaking wet, to a cold north wind while he was driving forty miles in an open car. That's the reason he took pneumonia. And it's the only reason. I don't know what Rush may have been saying to you, but I've known your father ever since he was born, and I can tell you that Paula might have gone on making a fool of herself to the end of time without his dying of it. He was fond of her, I will admit. But he had a life of his own that she knows nothing about. He was too proud to tell her about it, and she hadn't wit enough to see it for herself. That's the truth, and this emotional sprawl she's indulging in now doesn't change it. Meanwhile, she is adding to her collection five new men!"

"I don't believe," said Mary quietly, "that there is one of them she knows exists, or wouldn't poison," she added with a smile, "to improve Father's chance of getting well."

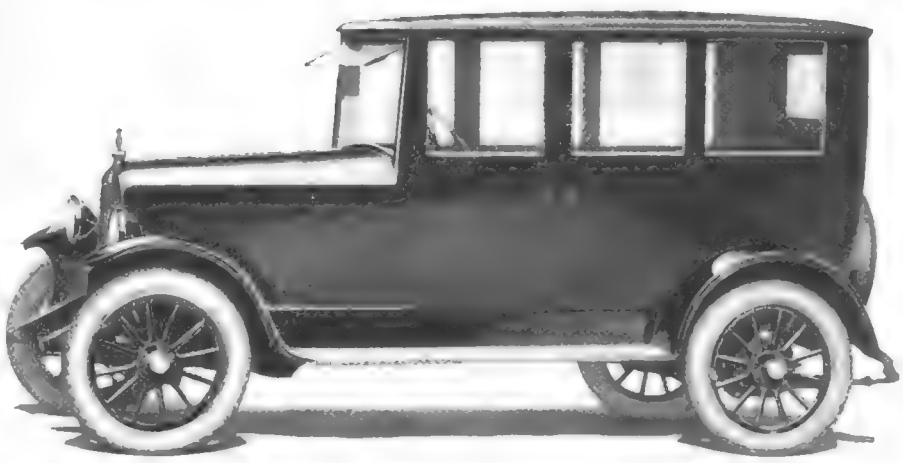
This won a nod of grim assent. "There are plenty of them. She could replace them easily enough. But her hunger for their worship is insatiable. For a while your father's infatuation satisfied her. She may have tried to pull herself up to his level. I dare say she did. But even at that time she could not abide Wallace Hood, though he was kindness itself to her, simply because he kept his head. Unfortunately this poor young musician was not able to keep his."

It seemed to Mary, even when allowance was made for the bitterness of the desperate old woman, who then went on for the better part of an hour with her bill of particulars, that this must be true. Paula must have lost her head, at any rate. What Mary herself had seen the beginning of must have gone on at an accelerated rate until it was beyond all bounds. There had been few hours when March might not come to the house, and none to which he did not stay. There were whole days when Paula was hardly out of his company. She took him about with her to people's houses. She talked about him when she went alone. Those who had at first not known what to think at last had come to believe that there was only one thing they could.

"I tried to suggest to her, quite early, before it had gone so far, that she was in danger of being misunderstood. It only made her furious. And John was hardly less so when I mentioned to him that I had spoken to her. He would see nothing; kept a face of granite through it all."

"Aunt Lucile," Mary asked, after a little silence, "do you think she has really been unfaithful to Father?"

Miss Wollaston hesitated. "Should you



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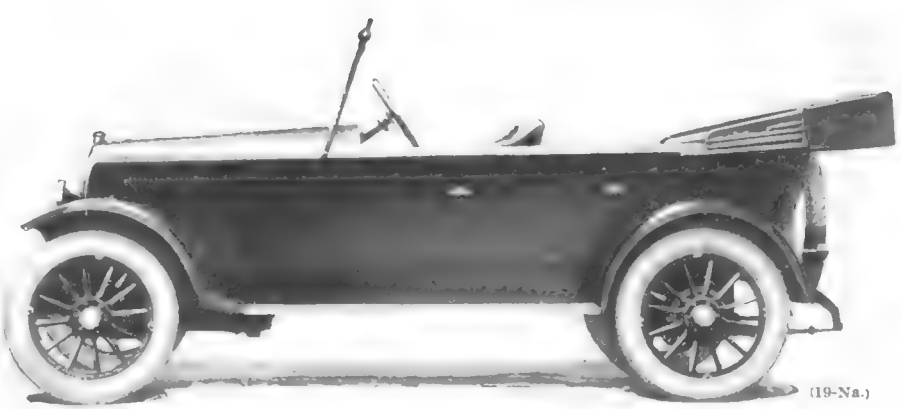

(19-Na.)

The Leader of Light-Weight Cars

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consider the conduct I have described to be an example of fidelity?"

"I mean in the divorce-court sense," Mary persisted.

"That," her aunt said, more nearly in her old manner than anything that Mary had yet seen, "that is a matter upon which I have no opinion."

It was a possibility that Mary had contemplated as early as that first night of all, when Paula, having sung his song, had come herself to find him in Annie's old bedroom, where she had had him hidden, and with a broken laugh had pulled him up in her arms and kissed him, unaware that she was not alone with him. One kiss, as an isolated phenomenon, didn't mean much, Mary allowed, but when a man and a woman who were going to be left alone together a lot started off that way, they were likely to get somewhere. And where the man was the composer of that love-song, and the woman the singer of it, it was almost a foregone conclusion that they would.

But this was not the conclusion that she had come to when she stopped old Nat on his way down-stairs to turn March out of the house. The evidence, Rush's and Aunt Lucile's, might seem to point that way, but it didn't somehow make a convincing picture. I think, though, that in any case she would have gone down to see him.

He had found himself a seat on a black oak settle in the hall around the corner of the stairs, and his attitude, when she came upon him, was very like what it had been the other time, bent forward a little, his hands between his knees, as if he were braced for something.

"Paula won't be able to see you to-day," she said. He sprang to his feet and she added instantly: "I'm her stepdaughter, Mary Wollaston. Won't you come in?" Without waiting for an answer, she turned and led the way into the drawing-room.

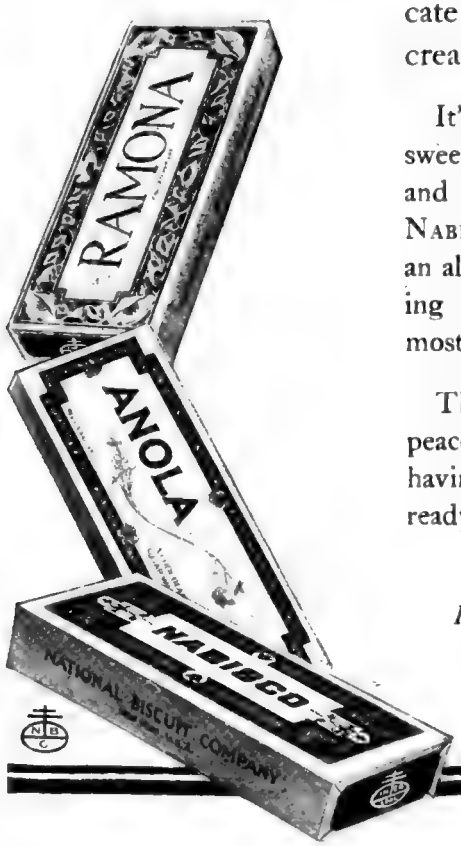
So far it had all been rehearsed, on her way down-stairs, even to the chair in the bow window which she indicated, having seated herself, for him to sit down in. She had up to that point an extraordinary buoyant sense of self-possession. This left her for one panicky instant when she felt him looking at her a little incredulously, as if, once more, he wondered whether she were really there

"I think, perhaps, you haven't heard of Father's illness," she began—not just as she had expected to. "Or, did you come to ask about him?"

"No," he said. "I hadn't heard. Is it—yes, of course it must be—serious. I'm sorry."

She was struck by the instantaneous change in his manner. From being, part of him anyhow, a little remote—wool-gathering would have been Aunt Lucile's term—he was vividly here. It wasn't possible to doubt the reality of his concern. As a consequence, when she began informing him of the state of things, she found herself pulled away, more and more, from the impersonal phraseology of a medical bulletin. She told him how the attack had come on; how they had put up a bed for him in the music-room, where there was the most air, and begun what it was evident from the first would be a life-and-death struggle; she quoted what Rush had told her when he met the train. "I agree with Rush," she concluded. "They

When Sweets Appear



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let me see him for a few minutes this morning, just so he'd know that I had come back. It isn't possible not to believe that he will get well."

When she had squeezed away the tears which had dimmed her eyes, she saw that his own were bright with them. "He's more than just a great man," he said gravely. Then, after a moment's silence, "If there's anything I can do— It would be a great privilege to be of service to him. As errand-boy, any sort of helper. I had some hospital experience at Bordeaux."

It was, on the face of it, just such an offer as any kindly disposed inquirer would have made. Such as Wallace Hood, for example, had in fact made, only rather more eloquently, less than an hour ago. But Mary's impulse was not to answer, as she had answered Wallace, with a mere polite acknowledgment of helpless good intentions. In fact, she could find for the moment no words in which to answer him at all.

He said then, "I mustn't keep you."

Even in response to that she made no movement of release. "There's nothing even for me to do," she said, and felt from the look this drew from him that he must, incredibly, have caught from her some inkling of what her admission really meant.

He did not repeat his move to go, nor speak, and there was silence between them for perhaps the better part of a minute. It was terminated, startlingly for her, by her brother's appearance in the doorway. He had on his rain-coat and carried his hat and an umbrella in his hands.

"Mary, I'm just going out," he began, then broke off short, stared, and came on into the room. March rose, but Mary, after one glance at Rush's face, sat back a little more deeply in her seat. Rush ignored her altogether.

"My sister has been away during the past few weeks," he said to March. It had, oddly, the effect of a set speech. "If she had not been, I'm sure she would have told you, as I do now—" He stumbled there, evidently from the sudden blighting sense that he was talking like an actor—or an ass. "This isn't the time for you to come here," he went on. "This house isn't the place for you to come. When my father's well enough to take matters into his own hands again, he'll do as he sees fit. For the present you will have to consider that I'm acting for him."

Mary's eyes during the whole of that speech never wavered from March's face. There was nothing in it at all at first but clear astonishment, but presently there came a look of troubled concern that gave her an impulse to smile. Evidently it disconcerted her brother heavily, for at the end of an appalling silence, not long enough, however, to allow March to get his wits together for a reply, Rush turned about abruptly and strode from the room. A moment later they heard the house door close behind him.

The two in the drawing-room were left looking at each other. Then, "Please sit down again," she said.

The next instalment of ***"Mary Wollaston"*** *will appear in the April number.*

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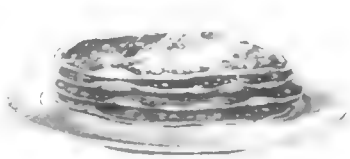

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Sole Makers

3275

CABBAGES *and* SHOES

(Continued from page 63)

death of George Good in Three Valleys, and the fact that he, one of his best friends, could not attend the funeral.

Laboriously Bob replanted the stricken ground. The substitute vegetables matured slowly, but they grew. Finally he was ready to begin garden-truck deliveries. Then came the second blow. With an overwhelming sense of dismay he found he had failed to analyze his market. His customers with little exception were the smarter folk of the city, families who seldom bought beans, cabbages, onions, rhubarb, horse-radish, turnips, carrots, radishes, cucumbers, squash, kohlrabi and few potatoes. What they ordered were asparagus, cauliflower, celery, eggplant, endive, artichokes, parsley, Brussels sprouts and spinach—vegetables Bob's father had never raised and which he had not thought to plant.

It was a bitter set-back. But he swore his mother to silence, and intimated nothing to his father, who still sat patiently day after day in his darkened room. For weeks following the close of the season Bob put off balancing the farm accounts. But the job had to be done, and he buckled down to it at last.

THE result was even worse than he had dreaded. The chickens and the cows alone had been profitable, though they could not begin to carry the overburdening loss in truck, berries and fruit. Quality Farm as a whole had merely managed through alive, with nothing to show for salaries or surplus interest on the extra investment.

"Looks like a sort of bleak winter, Mother," he gritted. "But we've got the cows and chickens to work with. If you're game to keep it from Dad, we'll try to put off the payments on the machine, and scrape through till next year."

"I'm willing to do anything, Robert," his mother said simply.

There was a knock on the kitchen door. Bob answered it. On the steps stood Squire Meek.

In Neff township there was no figure better known than Squire Wilberforce Meek. He was anything but meek. Tall and straight, with a claim of Virginia lineage, he impressed you at first sight with a sense of trust. At second glance, however, his mustache and goatee seemed trimmed a trifle arrogantly, and his eyes set close and narrow. And upon inquiry you discovered that he was a parasite living on Neff township farmers, sometimes getting a strangle hold and killing. One and all royally hated him.

"Good afternoon," greeted the squire. He entered the room unbidden, and withdrew several oblong papers from a tan wallet. "These are due, I believe." He held them so Bob could see. They consisted of three judgment notes amounting to twenty-two hundred dollars, payable to the order of George Good, and transferred to Wilberforce Meek with the signa- of Amanda Good. One was signed by himself, the other two by his father.

The truth burst over the boy in a moment. When the Good estate had been settled, the squire had descended on the widow like the buzzard scavenger that he

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was, and had bought up the notes at a reduced figure. It was a scheme thoroughly typical of the man. Without implements, stock and house furnishings, the owners of Quality Farm would be helpless to continue on the place, and the farm could be picked up cheap by the man who held the mortgage.

Bob tried to think. There was no use asking mercy from the squire. The situation was here. What was he going to do about it? He heard himself speaking thickly: "If you'll come back later, I'll have the money ready."

The squire frowned. "Don't attempt to bluff Wilberforce Meek, young man. You're not going to find twenty-two hundred dollars growing on trees."

"I'll get it," said Bob fighting for time.

"You won't get it from, the bank," informed the squire. "Mr. Candee happens to know that your crazy scheme hasn't worked out."

"I'm not counting on the Farmers' Bank," answered Bob unsteadily.

"If you think you're going to get it from your neighbors, you're mightily fooled," continued the squire. "Charley Watkins told me everybody is saying you ought to paint Quality off your barn and put on Failure."

Bob swallowed and said nothing. The squire's mouth twisted exultantly.

"You're at the end of your rope, young man! Where's your father?"

"You can't see him," said Bob darkly.

"I have a legal right to present these notes."

"You can consider them presented," said the boy, swinging open the outside door.

The squire's trim face flushed with anger. "And you, young whippersnapper, can consider the fact that to-morrow morning at nine o'clock I will be in court entering these notes, and issuing an execution for the sheriff!"

WHEN the visitor had gone, Bob's mother cried bitterly on her son's shoulder.

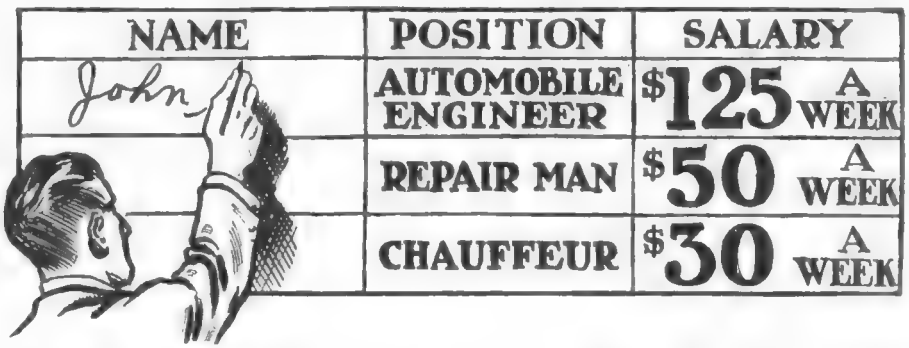
"It's no use, Robbie. George Good was the only man who would ever give us two thousand dollars. We're no good, I guess. They'll sell Harry and Bess and the cows out of the barn. They'll sell your father's chair under him like they did the bed under Ellis Reeser."

"They won't!" said the boy, his face swollen with emotion. "I'm going to Pennver now," he added.

He got out the car, drove to Three Valleys and caught the one o'clock trolley. Not until he entered the car was he aware that he had forgotten to change his clothes. His coat and trousers were faded blue overall material, his shoes caked with mud, his hat a black felt discolored with hay and clover dust.

Arriving in Pennver, he went straight to the First National Bank, where he had carried his account. He had also known some of the boys who worked here. To his chagrin these latter hailed his appearance in overalls with visible embarrassment. One of them, Jack Monigan, consented to take him in to the cashier; but his introduction was so weak and colorless that Bob stammered along for fully a minute before he got into his natural stride. When he had finished, the cashier looked impressive.

"Er—we shall look into the matter, Mr. Murray, and advise you."



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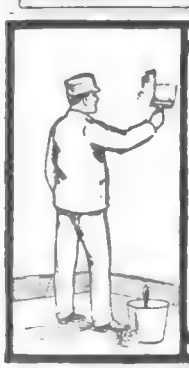

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Dept. 333
608 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago

"When?"

The quick question caused the official to stiffen. "At our convenience," he replied testily. "A big institution can not drop everything, and run to look into a small doubtful rural enterprise on which it is asked to make a loan."

"I'm not asking you to drop everything," said Bob earnestly. "But I have to have the money by nine o'clock tomorrow morning, or I'm wiped out."

"Impossible! Er—in fact, to be perfectly candid, I hardly think from your description that we shall find the farm successful enough to favor it at all."

"If it was successful, I wouldn't need you at all," protested the boy. "I always thought it was a banker's business, sir, to finance a promising business and encourage and develop it to where it will be a big customer for the bank."

The cashier rose stiffly. "If you would know your business, young man, as well as we are acquainted with ours, it might not be necessary for you to come begging us for a loan. Good afternoon."

A few minutes later Bob found himself on the sidewalk, feeling as one of his wilted tomato plants looked after the frost.

HE took his bearings and started doggedly down a cross-town street until he came to a distinctive office building. On the marble slab above the door had been chiseled: "Grainger Company—Maker of the Highest Quality Shoes in the World."

There was a new boy on the mahogany bench in the reception hall, a new girl at the telephone switchboard.

"I'd like to see Mr. Grainger," Bob announced.

Both boy and girl swept his farmer clothes casually.

"He is busy," droned the girl. "What do you wish to see him about?"

"A private matter," said Bob shortly. "Kindly ask him whether he will receive Mr. Robert Murray, business personal."

The girl shook her head. "He doesn't see people without an appointment."

The door to the street opened and Mr. Jones, the secretary of the firm, entered. He stopped at the sight of his former accountant in overalls, and shook hands puzzledly.

"I'm in a hole, Mr. Jones," explained Bob simply. "I'd like to see Mr. Grainger. Would it be possible for you to take me in?"

"Why, I suppose so. Any one with Mr. Grainger?" The telephone girl swallowed and shook her head. The two men went down the wide familiar corridor and turned into a room that Bob had never before invaded. The executive figure seated at a mirrored mahogany desk-table, seemed an ambassador rather than a business man.

"I'd like to introduce Mr. Robert Murray," said the secretary. "He is anxious to see you personally. He didn't confide the reason, but I trust it is all right. He used to be in my department. A very able young man."

The head of the Grainger Company glanced at Bob keenly, registering just a flicker of surprise at the boy's farm attire.

"Glad to see you, my lad. What can I do for you?"

Bob plunged straight into his mission. "I want you for a partner in our farm, Mr. Grainger. You furnish the idea—I do the work."

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The eminent shoe manufacturer seemed slightly taken aback. "My dear boy, you've come to the wrong party. I'm afraid I couldn't furnish an idea for a farm."

"You've already furnished it," informed Bob.

"Eh!" The older man looked mildly startled.

"When I was in college," explained the boy, "a fellow in my class had a pair of shoes I liked. They always made him look distinctive. I asked where he got them. He said they were Grainger shoes. I went to a store and found Grainger shoes cost a dollar and a half to three dollars more a pair than shoes without any particular name, like those I had bought before. A dollar and a half was a lot of money to me, but I bought the Grainger shoes. They gave me twice as much wear and pride as the ones I had bought before. That's why I applied first to the Grainger Company for a job."

His hearer glanced up at him with a shade more of quiet interest.

"This is the idea you've given me for our farm," went on Bob. "Most farmers to-day are selling their products like those shoes I used to buy—without any particular name. Why can't a farmer build up the reputation of his goods like any other manufacturer, and sell them at the cost of quality plus a fair profit? In other words, if Grainger's highest quality shoes in the the world have made a ten-million-dollar success right here in Pennver, why can't Grainger and Murray's highest quality farm in the county make a ten-thousand-dollar success?"

"SIT down and tell me about it," invited the manufacturer.

Bob sat down and told his story. When he had finished, he leaned forward simply. "It isn't so much what I'll lose if you can't see your way clear to come in with us. I can start at something else. It's that my mother loses her homestead, and my father his last chance to prove to his neighbors that quality pays. And he's helpless—blind in his room!"

Mr. Grainger looked thoughtfully out of the window. "Would you mind asking Mr. Jones to step in here, Mr. Murray? While you are waiting in his office, I will consider the matter and let you have a prompt decision."

Cast in an atmosphere of doubt, Bob repaired to his former chief's office, delivered the message and sat down to await the other's return. Was Grainger genuinely considering his plan, or was he merely using this softer method to turn him down? In twelve or fifteen minutes Mr. Jones returned. Bob's last hope fled when he saw the other's face.

"Sorry, Murray," he said gently.

"No chance?" asked Bob, feeling suddenly worn out.

The other reluctantly shook his head. Bob got to his feet, trying to smile. He had played his last card, and lost. His father had lost with him. So had Quality Farm. Squire Meek had won, along with the neighbors who had predicted failure.

"I'm sorry, Murray," said the secretary again, kindly. "Can I help you to a position somewhere?"

"I—I suppose I'll have to be getting something," Bob confessed. "Mother and Dad will be living with me now——"

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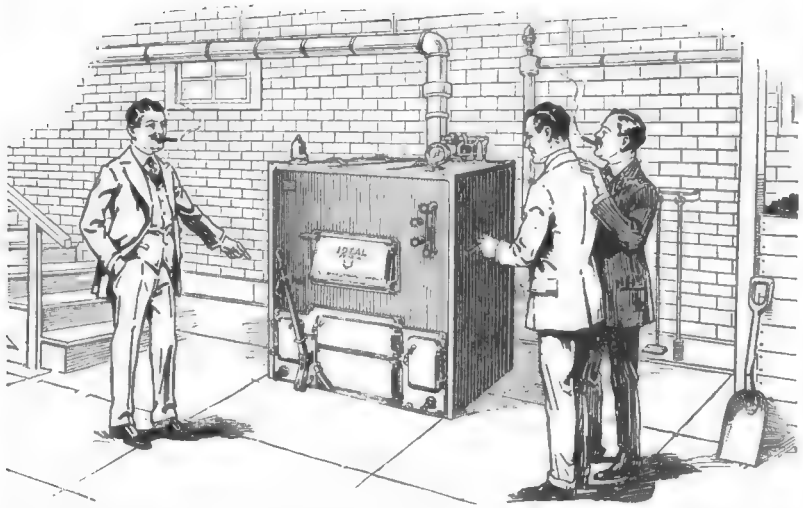

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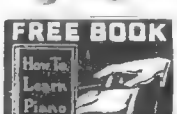

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"There's a job open here," mentioned the other. "Mr. Grainger said I should offer it to you. Don't know as you'll care for it, though. It's subordinate work."

"I'll be glad of anything," said Bob simply.

"Good. You're to start first thing in the morning."

"I'm afraid that lets me out," said Bob. "I couldn't——"

"Stay at my house overnight. Mrs. Jones will be glad to have you."

"Thank you very much," hastened the other. "I appreciate it, Mr. Jones. But I've got to get home and tell the folks how I made out. Besides, I haven't any decent clothes along."

"You'll still have time to buy an outfit in the stores," suggested the secretary, glancing at his watch. "I'll advance you the money if you need it. Later you can phone your mother to pack a bag and send it in. Saturday afternoon you can go home for the week-end and make what arrangements are necessary."

"But——"

"Better stay, Murray," advised the secretary quietly. "A job to-day is better than none to-morrow."

Bob realized that his former chief spoke wisely. Soberly he accepted the position and left for the shop of his former favorite outfitter. He needed clothes, anyway. He hadn't bought any for nearly a year. Later he telephoned his mother not to worry—that though he had been unable to save the farm, he had secured a good position in town, and would be back Saturday to make arrangements to bring them both to live with him. Meanwhile he would try to find a house in the suburbs, which would seem more like the country.

THAT night Mr. Jones explained the nature of the new job. To Bob's dismay he found it that of follow-up, checking the receipt and progress of rush orders through the various departments of the factory, with daily reports to the chief clerk of the production department. It was rather a minor position, and required little ability except accuracy. Its former incumbents, according to Bob's memory, were young chaps just out of high school. He doubted whether its salary was more than sixty dollars a month.

As he took up his new duties next morning, his spirits had never been lower. Mechanically he made his way about the factory, from floor to floor, from one foreman's desk to another, a dull resentment beginning to kindle within him against the millionaire shoe manufacturer who had held the power to help Quality Farm, and had instead offered him an inferior commonplace position like this. The failure of Quality Farm refused to leave his mind—the thought of what success might have been achieved for his father with only a little assistance. He visualized the gloating features of Squire Meek, the dismay of his father and mother, their pathetic leave-taking of the old homestead, their silent unhappiness in town. What sort of a house could he give them at sixty dollars a month!

Late Saturday afternoon, with little joy in his homecoming, he took his car from the Three Valleys garage and drove back to the farm. Rust leaped up at him in lusty welcome, but he reproved him, and with

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heavy feet went around the house. His mother was waiting for him in the kitchen doorway.

She caught his shoulder and began to sob quietly.

"You mustn't take it so hard, Mother," he soothed.

She looked up, wiping her eyes with a corner of her apron.

"I'm so happy, Robbie," she said.

"Happy!" he repeated, fearing for the moment that she had gone out of her mind.

"Your father wants to tell you about it," she answered tenderly, and led the way up-stairs like a girl of sixteen. Dumfounded, he followed.

"Bob," greeted his father, his voice unsteady with feeling as he rose blindly above his chair, "Mother and I just realize what a good son God gave us. When Mr. Grainger was here——"

"Mr. Grainger!" exclaimed the son.

"He came the afternoon of the day you left. Mother says he had a big automobile. He asked her first to look over the farm. Then he came up and had a long talk in here."

"But what was he doing here?" repeated the son, bewildered.

"We're partners," explained his father, very erect. "The doctor's told him to work outside if he wants to live much longer. He's going to come out here in his car every nice day. Together we're going to make Quality Farm a success. He has faith in your idea, and says he's almost as enthusiastic as when he started his own business. He thinks the farm's done him good already, and he's glad he bought out Squire Meek."

"Your eyes, Papa!" timidly prompted the mother.

"A GREAT doctor came to look at me yesterday, Bob," said the father. "Doctor Suzzleman of Philadelphia. He's a friend of Mr. Grainger. He's coming again on Wednesday. He says in two or three months my eyes should be almost normal. It's just the scab from the disease that's affected my sight. He can cut it away in a few minutes. Of course I'll have to wear dark glasses outside for a while, especially in the sun, or when there's snow."

"Tell what Mr. Grainger said about Robbie!" said the mother excitedly.

"He said," continued the father proudly, "that when you told him your story, he knew he needed a young man like you in the business. He said you reminded him of himself at your age, that you understood the secret of his success in a nutshell, and have the get-up-and-git in you to do things. That's why he's putting you through different jobs in the factory. After you get a practical knowledge of leather and shoes, he's thinking of making you his assistant in the office—so he can get away more. And if you make good, you're to be one of the men who'll carry on the business after he's gone."

There was a short, palpitating silence broken by the sudden bolting of the son, then the sound of his hurried steps on the stairs.

"Why, Robbie!" called his mother. "What's the matter?"

"I want to telephone my boss," he answered noisily. "I want to tell him what pep I'll have when I get back to work on Monday morning."

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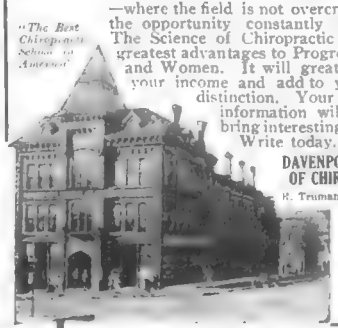

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The STORY of HOOVER

(Continued from page 37)

Americans are. You have not yet learned to grow old, either individually or as a nation. Now you, for example, do not look a day over twenty-five. How the devil do you do it?"

The days were days of wonder for the home-grown young Quaker engineer. Across America, across the ocean, then the stupendous metropolis of the world and the great business men of the "city," with week-ends under the wing of the big mining financier at luxurious English country houses with people whose names spelled history. And then the P. and O. boat to Marseilles, Naples, Port Said, Aden and Colombo, finally to be put ashore in a basket on a rope cable over a very rough sea at Albany in West Australia. There he was consigned, with the dozen other first-class passengers, mining adventurers like himself, to quarantine in a tent hospital on a sand spit out in the harbor with the thermometer never registering below three figures, even at night. The letters that Lou Henry got now made her wonder how he could ever have had trouble with English 1B., if throbbing interest had any merit in English composition.

Into the Australian Desert

AND then he came to the Australian mine-fields themselves, in a desert where the temperature can keep above one hundred degrees day and night for three weeks together. Also there is wind, scorching wind carrying scorching dust. And surface water discoverable only every fifty or sixty miles. Of course one expects a desert to be hot and dry—that's why it is a desert—but the West Australian desert rather overemphasizes the necessities of the case. It is a deadly monotonous country although not wholly bare; there is much low brush just high enough to hide you from others only half a mile away, a place easy to get lost in, and hard to get found in when once lost.

And all this desert was being prospected by thousands of men of a dozen nationalities, all seeking and suffering, for gold. The railroad had got in only as far as Kalgoorlie, but the prospectors were far beyond the rail head. They carried their water-bags with enough in them to keep themselves and their horses alive between water-holes. In the real "back blocks" they could not carry enough for horses, so they used camels with jangling bells and gaudy trappings of gay greens, orange, scarlet and vivid blues, making strange contrasts with the brown-gray bush. Along the few main roads moved dusty stages—light, low, almost springless three-seated vehicles, with thin sun-tops overhead, and boxes and bags in front, behind and underneath, and all swarmed about by pestilential flies, millions of flies, sprung from nowhere to harass the thirsty, weary travelers.

But only the agents and engineers rode in the stages; it cost too much for the little prospectors, the "dry-washers," who carried their few provisions and scanty outfit in packs on their backs, and tramped the trails, stopping here and there to toss the dry soil into the air and watch for the gold flakes to fall into the pan while the lighter earth blew off into the wind.

In the camp were gathered a motley crew, mostly hard, reckless men who drank and bet their gold-dust away as fast as they found it. But everywhere they were finding gold, and all the time came new reports or rumors of more farther on. The headquarters of Hoover's employers were in Coolgardie when he arrived, but were soon moved on to Kalgoorlie, following the railroad. The offices were in one of the three or four stone two-story buildings, which lifted themselves proudly above the ruck of weltering little toy-like houses of corrugated iron.

Forty thousand people were supposed to be living in this "camp" at one time, buying water at two shillings and sixpence the gallon, which was cheap—they were paying seven shillings in some other camps. At first it was all brought by rail from the coastal plains four hundred miles away, but when the mines began to get down they struck water at a few hundred feet. But it was salt, and expensive condensing plants had to be set up, which kept the price still high. Coolgardie once boasted of having the "biggest condensing plant in the world," with rows on rows of enormous cylindrical corrugated-iron tanks lying on their sides, over acres of ground, with all the pumps and boilers and steam pipes to keep these tanks supplied. Water was cheap there, only twelve or fifteen shillings the hundred gallons.

But out in the prospects and on the trails there was no such aqueous luxury. There was no water for washing and little to drink. And that little was mostly drunk as a terrible black tea, like lye, heated and reheated, with now a little more water added, now another handful of leaves. I have a well-vouched-for story of an Australian girl who went into this gold paradise with her husband, who was manager, at a large salary, of one of the first mines. She used to take a cupful of water and carefully wash the baby, and afterward the little girl, and then herself. After that, it was saved for the husband to rinse the worst off when he came home from the mine. But he could have an additional half cup to finish with because he was so dirty. And they tried not to use soap with it so that finally, after letting it settle, it could be added to the horses' drinking-water. It was not that the family could not afford to pay for water, but there was simply no water to buy.

A Staggering Job

INTO this cheerful hell came the young Quaker engineer from the heaven of California and the "city" offices of London where sat the big men who were intent on having their share of the big things in West Australia. He was to do his best for his particular big men, but how he was to do it was mostly for him to find out. His firm had already acquired interests in several promising properties. He was to help develop these mines and, perhaps, to find new ones to be taken out. A junior member of his firm was already on the ground when Hoover arrived, but he remained only a few months. It was a long way to London and Hoover could get few instructions. It was up to him. It was a hard life with many opportunities to go wrong in any of many ways. But he kept his brain clear, his body and soul clean, and just everlastingly worked.

There was all kinds of work to do, and all sorts of new things to learn about mines and mining. The ore occurred in the rock in a manner different from that in any other known gold-field; so finding it, and getting it out, and then getting the mineral out of the strange new kind of ore, required resourcefulness, "original research," as the scientists say, and constructive imagination. And the technical problems of discovering and manipulation once solved, there were still needed organization, system and administration to make the mine a paying one.

But all these things were exactly the young engineer's specialties. He was from the beginning, as we already know, and conspicuously is to-day, resourceful, original, capable of prompt decision, an organizer and administrator. Although there were many trained engineers in West Australia, there was no one to equal him in these specialties of his. And very soon his firm's mines, which had so far had little benefit of executive ability coupled with technical knowledge and originality, began to pay, and their stocks went up on the London market—which was the criterion of success in the eyes of the man in the "city." About the stock ratings Hoover knew little and perhaps cared less. He did care, however, about making good mines out of bad ones. And that was exactly what he was doing.

Discovering a Mine

AND pretty soon he did the other successful thing that the big men in London hoped for, and that he kept always working for. He uncovered a big new mine. He had turned up several promising leads, but their development proved disappointing. But the "Sons of Gwalia" realized his hopes from the beginning. It was out from Kalgoorlie two or three days' hard riding, near a smaller camp called Leonora. He went out and took personal charge of the opening-up and equipping of the whole mine and plant, living in a little "tin" house and gathering about him a staff of the best of the firm's assistants collected from all over the colony. It was hot, although the climbing mercury usually stopped at about one hundred and ten degrees. But that only further inflamed the enthusiasm of the group. They had the real thing; and they had a real leader—a very boyish-looking boy of scant twenty-five. They forgot to watch the thermometer. They were more interested in water and transportation and labor and all the other things that are as necessary to a good mine as the gold in the ore-veins.

Occasionally, however, they had some relaxation. For one thing, they thought sometimes about food. One of the men had his wife with him, and she imported chickens and later even ducks, which never, however, set webfoot in water. And they had a garden because they decided they were so in need of green vegetables. They turned a little priceless water from the condenser into the garden, but not enough for the vegetables and too much for the accountant's books. After

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estimating that the one undersized cabbage they raised cost them sixty-four pounds' worth of water, he forbade further gardening.

They had also a pet emu. So did the wife of the manager of another mine near by. They used to arrange to have the emus meet occasionally and there was always a glorious fight. Once, when they had got the lady's emu over for a visit, one of the Australian boys thought it would look amusing in trousers. So he took off his overalls and after immense exertion got them on the legs of the creature, with the straps securely fastened over its neck and back. But the great bird became so enraged that the men could not safely get near enough to it to get off its clothing and even its mistress feared ever to approach it again. And there was a pet goat named Sydney that ate several boxes of matches and had to have its internal fires extinguished by the only available liquid, which was the tinned butter that had yielded to the one hundred and ten degrees. And there was a tennis-court occasionally wetted down with the beer that always went stale while they were saving it for state occasions. It was all a happy, glorious time—because they had discovered and were making one of the great mines of West Australia.

Made at Twenty-five

HOOVER was now twenty-five, and a man of large reputation in mining circles in Australia and London, with a salary to correspond. He had spent about twenty-four months in West Australia, although they ran over all of one and parts of two other years, so that he is generally credited with having remained there three years. And he could have gone on among the Australian mines for as many years as he liked, for the big men in London now fully realized that they had the unusual man, and that his only limit in Australia would be the limit of the possible. But the new opportunity was calling.

Just about this time a young Chinaman of royal family in Peking had made a successful *coup d'état*, and had formed a cabinet for the first time in the history of China, and this cabinet decided to effect a coordinated control of all the mines of the empire. There was therefore established a Department of Mines, with a wily old Chinaman, named Chang Yen Mow, at its head. He understood that Chinamen knew little about mining, and hence decided to find a foreigner to help him manage the mines of the empire. He also thought that a foreigner, thus attached as an official to his department, could be of particular help to him in dealing with other foreigners inclined to exploit Chinese mines more for their own benefit than China's. This official was to be in a position much like that of an under-secretary in a British cabinet department, and was to be given the title, in the Chinese equivalent, of "Director-General of Mines." And he was to have a salary appropriate to such a large title. With this all decided, it only remained to find the proper foreigner, who should be a man who knew much about mines and was honest. There was, as we know, just such a man in West Australia.

The next instalment of "The Story of Hoover" will appear in the April number.

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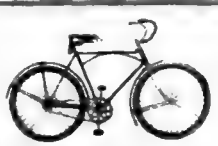

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A BYWAY OF DANBY

(*Continued from page 78*)

was a fool. I am willing to pay for my folly. I should be ashamed if I went back on him so utterly. I can not love him any more, but I need not refuse to say good-by when he asks it."

"He asks—" began Beck hotly—then stopped. "Very well," he added abruptly. "I will meet you as you direct."

They parted, and Beck hurried through his farewells, and was out in the road in so short a time that he reached the little gate some moments before her, and walked along the lane under the trees, so that she should alight from her carriage and let it drive away, and so stand alone by the gate when he reached her.

THEY walked through the garden in silence until they reached the open ground where they crossed a meadow before they entered the woods back of Mrs. Reeves's house, and there Beck noticed for the first time that she had no wrap about her shoulders. The night was warm, but there was a slight dew upon the grass, and his thin shoes suggested to him how slight a protection the girl's slippers were. He turned and gazed steadily at her as she stepped along in the bright moonlight. She looked so innocent, so lovely, that a horrid rancor rose in him against the man who had been before him. What had he perhaps stolen from her? Well, he could tell from their greeting. He would then know what besides childish passion and fancy she had given him.

"Are you warm enough?" he asked, with a sort of coldness in his voice that came from the struggle within him.

"Oh, yes." She turned and looked at him over her shoulder. "I am used to the night air—I love it."

He stepped close to her. "You have met—before?"

Her eyes met his. Her lovely face was still turned to him over her shoulder. "Often," she said.

They moved on in silence, and as they entered the woods again she laid her hand very lightly on his coat sleeve. "When I touch your arm, stand still," she said, and Beck through his angry submission admired the calm of her voice, her untrembling fingers.

"I must not be in earshot," he said. It was hardly a question; more the statemen of fact; but she answefed it with a sudden passion that startled him.

"I want you to be within hearing," she said.

It was full moonlight. Beautiful as the meadow had been, the wood, which was little cleared or pruned, was even more lovely. Great pools of darkness, soft flickerings of yellow shining light, the tremulous stirring of the leaves bringing a lacy pattern across the whiteness of the girl's figure as she moved on beside him, and then suddenly she turned and laid her hand on his arm. Beck stood still and watched her advance, and in a moment more saw a man's figure come quickly forward from under a tree, and they stood together in the moonlight. Remembering her imperative command, he moved a little nearer, and could see them both plainly as they faced each other: the young man uttering broken words of gratitude and love, the girl in a sort of steady silence.

Beck set his teeth in a grim smile. The man had not snatched her hands in his; he had been permitted little, though given too much.

His words began to come to Beck's ears. Tender, desperate words, pleading with her to come with him, to remember old days, better days, days he had not known since those early times, when she loved him. He poured out explanations of some wrong he had committed, explanations of his utter freedom from his old ties, the wife's refusal to ever see him. He expatiated on what their life would be, and through it all the girl stood looking straight up at the handsome, eager young man, with nothing of scorn or coldness in her aspect, but no yielding either; and then she spoke:

"I know you would be good to me, my dear Ernest," she said gently; "and if I loved you as I thought I did years ago, I would go with you—since she is no longer to be hurt by it. But I have been less faithful than you. I'm sorry; I can't help it. I stopped loving you over a year ago, and it has been nothing but a semblance of love since that. You know it as well as I do. I have nothing to give you. I beg you to forgive me. I unwittingly deceived you; you, however, should not have sought me at the time, so we both have something to pardon. Let us part in kindness and part forever."

"Marian, Marian," cried the young man, and covering his face, he stood a figure of such grief that Beck pitied him. But the girl looked at him unmoved.

"You will forget me out in that new country," she said. "You are not made of stuff to suffer. If you had been, you would have been moved years ago, and so would I, to some desperate step. You ask me to go partly, my dear Ernest, because you are going alone; it sounds cruel, but it is not, it is only true, so stand straight Ernest, say good-by and God bless you. I shall never forget you. I loved you very much. I shall never forget a pang of it, but I love you no longer. Let us part quickly."

His arms had dropped at his sides; he looked at her. He had grown very pale.

"Forever is a long time, isn't it?" he said. "May I kiss you good-by, darling?"

BECK saw her waver a moment, then she looked up into his face and, taking a step toward him, held out her arms. He caught her to him with a hungry movement. Beck felt it run through him like a knife, as the other man, holding her tightly, kissed her brow, her eyes, her mouth. She freed herself from him and stepping back, murmured a word that Beck could hardly catch, and walking on a step or two, turned and waved her hand, then walked on through the wood, and disappeared among the trees.

The young man stood looking after her in silence, then uttering a low sound, he turned, and took his way in another direction and Beck stood alone.

So standing, he felt a pang of mingled shame and relief, and turning, stepped softly, lightly, through the trees, until he saw the girl's figure ahead of him. It was not until they entered the garden that, coming beside her, he spoke:

"Must I go now?" he said.

She turned her profile to him, looking straight ahead. "No," she said; "come in with me a moment. I have something to say. I want to say it to-night. My mother and my aunt will be up-stairs at this hour. They leave the door open and the light in the parlor for me. Come."

They mounted the steps, passed in the door and through the hall, and entered the large, bare summer room, where blazed a light in lonely tenancy. It stood on a table, covered with flat glass dishes, filled with Cape Jessamine blossoms, near which stretched a long wicker chair. Going to it, the girl threw herself on it, and turning her cheek to the cushion, lay so, her lids dropped as though unable to meet the light.

She was very pale; dark shadows had painted themselves under her eyes; her compressed lips alone looked red against the dense pallor of her skin. And Beck, standing, looking down on her, felt his critical faculties deserting him. He drew up a low chair and waited, taking one of the white blossoms between his fingers and restlessly twirling it.

She stirred, raised her lids, looking straight ahead of her, then slipping her feet to the ground and throwing her train to one side, she sat upright, looking at him.

THEY looked at each other as people very seldom do, without confusion, and yet openly marking the signs of their emotions upon each other's faces. There was an intimacy in it that suddenly startled them both, and the girl drew back as Beck also sat more upright in his chair, and they felt as though they had just let go of each other's hands.

"I must tell you what I feel," she began hurriedly, "or I shall never be happy. I must tell you how ashamed I am that I misjudged him. There was no need of you, you saw that, as I did, and I have done what I think is the worst crime one can commit, I have rated a fellow being too low. I misjudged him, doubted him—I can not bear to think of it."

Beck felt her words echo in him. He, too, had felt shame at his unneeded presence, but after all, that was past now, and the thing that counted was something else.

"Don't mind it so much," he said gently; "be glad he was finer than you had hoped to find him. There is that to think of, and——"

She shook her head. "I would have confessed to him and begged him to forgive me, but it would have hurt him so much that it would have been gratifying my conscience at his expense. He will never know it, but I can never forget that I misjudged him, and do you know—" she faced him with her wide eyes, very dark and shining—"do you know a horrible fear oppresses me that I was subtly untrue and disloyal in every way, just the creature I can not bear to think myself—do you know why?"

He shook his head, watching her.

She leaned toward him: "I wanted you to know, to feel, without need of my saying so, that through those months of folly and passionate feeling I had maintained my self-respect and he had honored it. That many hours as we had wandered together——"

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She broke off, and rising. stood a moment, then walked the length of the room.

Beck pushed back his chair and his eyes followed her. He still twirled the jasmine in his fingers, and its scent seemed to him part of some divine folly which stirred him. Folly, indeed—men when they love women, as he thought he might love this girl, were always deceived, always savagely repaid for their anticipations of ecstasy—folly, stamp it out!

She turned and came toward him. How it flared up though, this folly! This was no ordinary creature, whose hidden evil would stain slowly through her outward whiteness. She was honest. He believed it as he had believed it of no other woman.

She stood before him, her eyes downcast, a faint smile touching her lips.

"Well," she said, "however disillusionized you may have been before, your vision is now even more complete. Go home and forget me. You will not soon follow another girl into the moonlight, will you?"

Beck stood up beside her, and looked in her eyes, with their unwonted softness. "Not another girl, but this particular one we are talking of I might pursue a little farther, I think; but I don't insist on moonlight: the moon does not shine at half past four to-morrow afternoon, and yet that hour will see me in your garden, if——"

The girl drew in a little breath. "I won't answer you," she said. "Don't ask me whether I will be there, or whether I want you," she said. "Guess for yourself. Let me be a modest Danbyan, of whom you know nothing but that she and her mother have tea at five o'clock in the afternoon. Perhaps if you come and pretend you hardly know my face, I may be able to sustain the thought that you really know my core."

Beck kept his hands locked tightly behind him: "Very well," he said. "We will begin with the A-B-C of Danby, won't we? Only at moments we may use a word or two of our own language, may we not? Our wonderful language, by which, for the first time in my life, I feel as though I spoke from my heart?"

She faced him with her wide shining eyes. "A word or two, perhaps," she said, "but the A-B-C of Danby, to begin with."

Beck bowed, and without touching her fingers bade her good night.

You

By Jeannette Marks

I

YOU are the sunshine,
I am the sod:
Flame to my rose leaf,
And goldenrod.

II

You are the shadow,
I am the rock:
Coolness of sheep bells,
Stilling the flock.

III

You are the starlight,
I am the stream:
Trees dripping luster
Into our dream.

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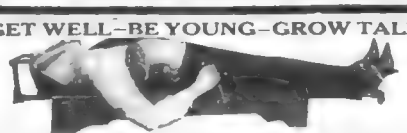

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BETRAYAL

(Continued from page 32)

"You have no part in this," Farid answered, with a grateful pressure. "We have means. Some of them come even from your New York. There is a rug merchant on the greatest of your bazaar streets who is of us."

It was his sincerity that told so much more than his mere words; the unconscious sincerity of a man whose eyes are turned to a single vision.

"It is a holy war," the syllables came, more tensely. "Our cause is just. My mother and sisters carried away, none knows where. My father's head, rolling across the courtyard almost to where I lay, bleeding under a pile of the newly slain. But the time is near. Within a year the Turk will be driven north of Medina and there will be a new prince in the Hejaz. Or——"

BRENNAN did not need to ask what that implied doubt meant; behind it he caught a glimpse of other courtyards, other heads. And how strangely the world was strung together in the minds of its peoples! Two men seemingly alone in a vast solitude, but from them both streamed forth invisible threads, reaching out in all directions, spun of the stuff of their own purposes and hopes. So many threads reaching out from every one, small wonder that they sometimes tangled and snarled in ways so strange and unsuspected by their spinners.

The chill of approaching day stole down on them; across the blackened fire Cragg's breathing sank to that of the deeper morning sleep. Farid rose unwillingly.

"I must go."

"You go alone?" Brennan asked.

"They wait for me out there. Walk with me a little way."

The line of the Khor rose sharp against the graying east, like teeth gnashing impotently at the sky. Under the bleak light the face of the desert showed stripped of all its day-time ensorcelments of the sun, but the air was of a wild, almost incredible sweetness.

How many things one never sees in civilization, Brennan thought—that dawn beauty, for instance, that shines for a few moments on the faces of those who have watched out the night beneath the stars. It was on the face of Farid now, like the leap of an inner light that was the forerunner of the day itself.

"Tell none what I have told you this night," he said, "not even one of my own people, for they would think I had betrayed. I took my life in my hands when I spoke so."

"You are safe with me—*safe*," Brennan whispered vehemently.

"I know it, for the heart of a friend is as a high tower. And now——"

"God go with you," Brennan cried, as their hands met in a wringing grip.

The sun was high when he returned to the camp. Sitting up in his blankets, Cragg surveyed him with a comprehending smile.

"I'll wager you fellows talked the night away," he said, as Brennan explained Farid's departure. "I know, for I too have had my twenties and my vigils of ridiculous wisdom, settling the affairs of the universe at large. But now—I sleep."

He yawned, heavy-eyed. In morning dishevelment, under the pitiless light, he showed his years. But he showed also, and for the first time since coming to Bir Ahmed, a certain full-fed satisfaction, as though like the Somalis he too had feasted in the hours of darkness. He nodded round at the desert in a friendly patronage.

"All right; I have been to you and I have seen you, and now I can go home and write as if I knew all about you."

"Three days back, a day to pack," he went calculatingly on. "If we start at once, I can make the next steamer."

"You are going so soon?" Brennan protested.

"Yes, this trip was the climax. Now I must go back and tell all about it."

The months that followed were weary for Brennan, left doubly alone with nothing to look forward to but Cragg's parting, and vague promise to mention his name in "certain quarters." Another monsoon broke, with a blast as of an oven and a scream of flying sand; but there was still no word, though Cragg's book was now out, and already spread wide across the earth. There were critiques of it in month-old New York papers, and in the columns of the Aden *Gazette* he read of its arrival at Peliti's Library. He almost sent for a copy, but the hot season inertia stayed his hand.

Of Farid also there was no news, unless it might be those persistent rumors of a growing unrest in Hadramaut. Brennan could picture him, gliding across the wastes of the Ruba al Khali, leaving in his wake a blue-hot flame of revolt. Then those rumors died away, and the sleepy eyes of the Turkish *vakeel* glowed as with a secret relief.

They gleamed with something more, too, when turned upon Brennan; something which the latter could only interpret as a silent, insolent attempt at some mutual understanding.

Then at last Cragg's book reached him direct from the publisher, with an autographed scrawl from the author on its fly-leaf. With it came a letter from the head offices, and it was to that that he first turned, hardly crediting the phrases informing him of his transfer to San Francisco. America again, and after little more than a year abroad. He blessed Cragg in a rush of gratitude, for he knew it was to him he owed it. Probably the sending of the book had been timed to that of the letter; that was just the sort of dramatics in which Cragg would revel.

HE SAT late over the book, in a grinning admiration of the way in which, after a scant six weeks of Bir Ahmed, Cragg conveyed the idea that he knew the East. Typical Cragg "splendid stuff"; giving an effect of mystic distances by the adroit use of strange names, veiling its ignorance under every trick of technique, much as a singer might disguise a faulty tone by brilliant fiorituri. If that were Brennan himself as the hero, he need not have feared recognition as so splendidly pure a type of young America. It was Farid who would be remembered when the work was laid down; slowly he gripped the

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story, emerging from its crowded background with that sureness with which, to Brennan, he had emerged from the background of the real Bir Ahmed.

Then came a moment when Brennan gasped; a later one in which the volume dropped from his astonished fingers. For there, spread in cold black across the pages, was every word that had passed between himself and Farid by that desert campfire.

Unbelievingly he read it again, but there was no mistake. Every tone, every sentence, was there, down to that passing mention of the rug merchant of Fifth Avenue. Even the wail of the jackal, the cry of the sleeping Somali, were thrown in for the effect of their added drama.

Long he sat head in hand, trying to disentangle it all. Had Cragg, in his demon of absorption, absorbed even through his sleep? Or had that sleep itself been merely feigned? He would never know; he doubted if even Cragg himself really knew. The strangest part of it was that Cragg had understood, every page of the book breathed that. He wondered if that understanding were the real Cragg, and that mean device of false sleep just a trick of that obsessing devil in his brain.

Brennan's mouth was hard as he took up the letter of appointment again. He saw now why the book had been so timed to arrive with it. The one was a confession, and the other—his fee.

IT MUST have been that same night that the end came, but in his recollection the days that followed were just a blur of pain and self-contempt, from which things stood out in biting detachment from time.

The night was still, even the perpetual creaking of the palms hushed in the breathless heat. It might have been the elemental oppression, but there was a weight of expectancy upon him that resisted all his arguments. It was just a book, he told himself, over and over again. Just a piece of fiction, which no one would take seriously, published in another tongue ten thousand miles away. But that book was being offered in Cairo and Aden, and there was that rug merchant in New York. The world was so horribly tied together by those threads, invisible but potent, which had followed them even into the emptiness of the desert.

He must have been hearing that call some time before he noticed it. The cry of a nigger urchin coming up from the street, in a long-drawn persistent reiteration of "O-oh Effendi!" One of the pictures that was to remain indelibly etched on his memory was that dusky face melting into the shadows, with two enormous eyes peering up at him through the greenish gloom, with the unintelligence of the eyes of some fish peering up from the depths of a tank.

Brennan was almost surprised that he should feel so little surprise that the boy brought a message from Farid. It almost seemed as though he had been waiting for it, and he followed, eager only to see Farid again and offer what reparation he could for Cragg's betrayal.

Silently he went down the hot slits of the streets, following the boy's silhouette slinking between white walls. Then it stopped and pointed silently to a house, one which Brennan had always thought

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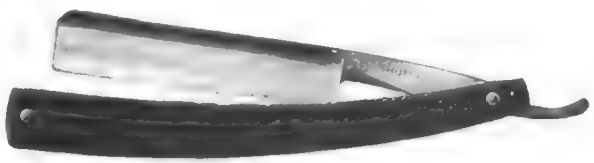

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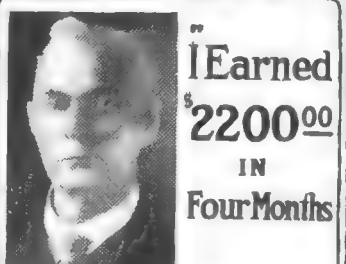

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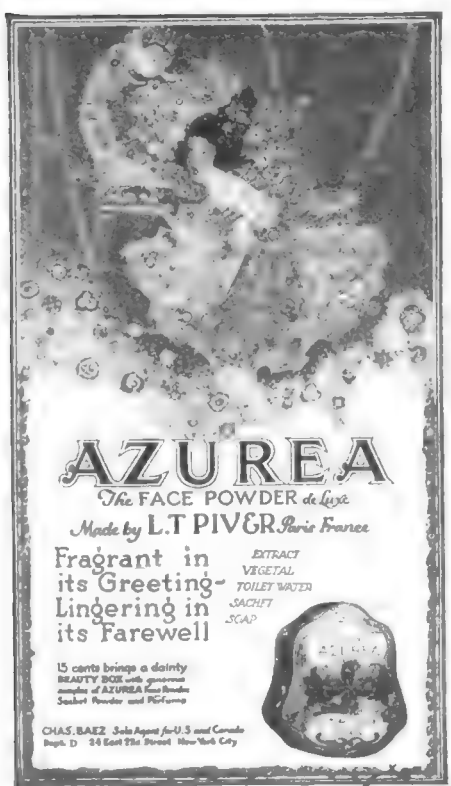
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deserted, an undistinguishable part of a mass of others that rose, in ill-omened disrepair, from a crumbling fragment of the wall that had once encircled the town.

From low in the east a wan wreck of a moon shed a light, haunting and lovely as the spirit of an exquisite woman shining through time's ravages. Against it the palms stood up, black still and tragic as enormous funeral plumes. There was a squeeze about Brennan's heart as he set foot on the stairs curving upward, wondering what vicissitude of failure or flight could have brought Farid to a place of such sinister repute.

With a curious softness he pushed open a door. A mean room, much like any other mean room anywhere at all, the lower places of the earth are all so much alike in their common, featureless discouragement. It was hot, filled with the reeking, merciless glare from one of those ubiquitous cheap Cosmic Petroleum lamps. It had never before occurred to him what strange scenes those lamps must sometimes light in their world-wide distribution.

AND that Farid should be there, in such a place! He lay stretched out on a string cot, his lips curved in a grave smile, with an air, even in his stillness, of a clean detachment from his surroundings. He might have been merely sleeping, but even before his hand fell upon the other's, or his eyes had caught that dark stain upon the folds of the white *djibbah*, Brennan knew.

He had known all the time, it seemed, from the first cry of that urchin beneath his window. It was no surprise, merely a more unbearable squeeze about his heart, that was all. He gave no sign even of that, for about the outstretched form there was an austere dignity that would have made emotion cheap by contrast.

He had really known it all from the moment of the first sight of those pages in Cragg's book. It was again without surprise, though with a bitter unuttered cry, that he saw those same pages, torn from their covers, scattered in grim significance upon Farid's breast.

He must have returned somehow to the agency, for already he had been there long, and the red-hot lances of the day were assailing the protecting shutters. He had a feeling that probably he would never speak again. The worst of it was that he would never know whose hand had dealt that death-thrust, whether that of an Arab, in fancied justice for fancied treachery, that of a Turk, or worst of all, Farid's own, in expiation for a cause brought to nothing by his own trust.

Hours Brennan sat while the great house cracked about him in the heat of day. The shadows were already long again when he reached for that letter of appointment. He would take it, of course, and all the more since now the air of Bir Ahmed was as ashes on his lips. He would take it and go on; one always goes on, and the facts of life persist, no matter what happens.

He would never even know how much that book might have really had to do with it all. He would never really know anything except that those pages scattered on Farid's breast, from whomsoever's hand they had fallen, had been grimly silent messages to himself.

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POUFF

(*Continued from page 67*)

Some, too, died in their natural courses, for Fate kept up her steady work to the end, and thumbed her index cards and put marks upon them, and sent them down to G Department for immediate attention. And some were born, and had destinies arranged for them. It seemed so strange to die or to be born so short a time before annihilation; but Fate, with an occasional touch at the golden tresses, worked calmly on. And Francesco Boppi searched and searched, eager now, and in fevered haste.

The last night! The comet slid across the sky like a huge canopy, and as it came, with its loud crash upon crash of ebullient eruption, it was like a great tent set up in the zenith and covering all the earth! It spread its edges, fringed and rolling with red vapors, wider and ever wider, until only a narrow blue line remained around the horizon. It was not only the edge which told, by its expansion, of the nearer approach, but the huge molten globe itself could be seen swiftly lowering upon the earth, and it was greeted by a hoarse chorus of frenzied shouts. Madness had seized upon the universe in that last awful hour, when the sky seemed to have buckled itself in, to have become a solid flaming mass, and to be hurling itself, with a velocity beyond computation, upon the insignificant planet of earth!

It was in those final seconds, during which the comet traveled its last odd thousand miles or so, that Francesco Boppi turned into the Plaza of St. Pietro. The square was thick with distracted creatures, some standing and shouting, some leaping, some running, some writhing on the ground. Every upturned face was like burnished red metal in this ghastly glare, but among them, Francesco, his heart leaping with joy, saw one which he would have recognized in any guise and in any mutilation; the face of his friend Enrico. It was distorted in a torture of supplication, and Enrico, looking up at the rapidly descending roof with tears streaming down his cheeks, was crossing himself vigorously but automatically, as if that could set a barrier between himself and this cataclysm.

With half-a-dozen bounds Francesco was upon him, and had him round the neck, and had turned up the traitorous face so that he could smile down upon it with his soft brown eyes and his gleaming white teeth. "No, no!" screamed Enrico, aghast at this startling apparition, which had clutched him and bent above him; and volubly, like the craven that he was, Enrico, with that certain other doom but a few seconds away, begged for his life!

Still smiling, Francesco Boppi, with a glance of calculation at the onrushing monster which was so soon to strike him dead, reached under his armpit for the long, keen-bladed knife. The knife was caught in its sheath! It would not come out; and now, for the first time, Francesco had a frantic fear of the comet—that it would arrive too soon!

Fate, calmly touching a button, loosed the sheath, which she had held so that the time might be fully ripe, as it was set down on the card; and the long, keen knife was poised above Enrico's heart, and the brown eyes looked softly down into the terrified black ones, while the white teeth gleamed.

Then the comet struck, and destroyed the earth and all that was on it; but it was not the comet which killed Enrico. It was the knife of Francesco Boppi! The last human countenance Fate saw was Francesco's. It was smiling peacefully. She had been at great pains to arrange for one smiling face at the end.

Fate, locking her desk, stepped upon her favorite pink cloud, and arranged her golden tresses so that the one fetching curl fell just behind her ear, and against her round white neck; she shook her classical garments into the long sweeping lines which gave her stateliness, and folded her arms, and waited. Somewhere in the universe a shrill cackling laugh swept swiftly by. Fate smiled sympathetically as she recognized the voice of Time. He was so old; so old!

If there were any one now left to whom to tell the tale, it would be a great privilege to narrate what followed immediately upon the destruction of the earth. Yet here is the chronicle: Earth, moon and comet, jarred from their equipoise in the firmament, dropped with terrific velocity into the blazing sun. The other planets, their equipoise destroyed by this catastrophe, followed suit, one after another, and the entire solar system burst into conflagration.

The destruction of the solar system destroyed in turn the balance of forces which held the nearer stars in space, and so sun went tumbling into sun, until all the infinite universe was filled with a wild, flaming chaos. From that impact such heat evolved that every atom of solid matter in all the illimitable ether was turned into flaming gas, which utterly consumed itself, leaving nothing. Thus perished creation. Time ceased. Even chaos disappeared. There was no such thing left as space. Fate vanished. Infinity was no more. Eternity itself came to an end. Everything was swept away. All gone—Pouff!

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The FIRST of the CUTIES

(*Continued from page 50*)

had on her black-silk dress that told her that she was in David Blake's house. Yet she had known it anyway. But how had she known it? That was what made her suddenly try to sit up. Susie heard her and came to the bedside to turn her pillow, then gazed, startled, at her face.

"Why, Toots!" she exclaimed. "Are you feeling better?"

To Toots it seemed useless to answer, and Susie hurried out of the room, coming back with a white-capped nurse. To Toots the sight of that nurse told the whole story. She had learned all about nurses in that hospital at Scranton.

"Was I very bad?" she demanded.

"You were not bad at all," Susie reassured her, "except that you talked a blue streak."

The nurse looked at her disapprovingly, but Toots did remember now. She did remember an endless procession of black, fevered hours when doors had slammed and men and women had gone in and out of the room, and given her things from thin glasses. It was not pleasant to remember except that it was over. She turned to Susie.

"HOW are things at the house? Are you working?"

"Not to-day," replied Susie. "Fred has gone to the city. Yesterday it was raining. The day before was the day——"

The nurse stopped her curtly this time, but the harm had been done.

"Was it only two days ago?" asked Toots sadly. It had all been so cool and pleasant and secure when she had waked that unconsciously she had felt that months had passed and that, in the meantime, everything had been settled. Her brow wrinkled.

"But my house," she said. "Do you think it is safe?"

At last Susie clumsily rose to the emergency.

"Oh, your house," she replied. "I went over there myself, and saw to everything. Just as soon as the first pleasant day we are going to begin the pictures again. Browning has settled for everything."

It was all a lie. Susie had not been near Toots's little house, and at the studio not a hand had been lifted. At any rate Toots had this day here in this big, pleasant room. Before she could leave it anything might happen.

And before she did leave a great many things really did happen. It would have been a physical impossibility for David Blake to be three hours in the house with Susie Frayer without learning every one of her troubles from the time of her birth, to say nothing of every detail of the stolen-picture affair.

"I see," he said several times.

"Of course," he went so far as to say on one afternoon, about a week later, "of course I am not the whole of Brazos and Dumont, but—hello! You out again?"

It was indeed Toots coming, pale and smiling, out to the moss-grown terrace on which he was walking with Susie. As if he had not known all day that she was coming! Blake rushed up and took her free arm. With the nurse on the other side he helped her into a huge wicker chair which had been upholstered with pillows. For a few minutes Toots was fully content to lie blissfully there sniffing the scent of the grass and the boxwood hedges—but presently she began to grow restless.

"I want to see my own house," she demanded shortly.

Blake looked at the nurse, but the nurse shook her head.

"In another day or so," she suggested.

Toots said no more. After all, this was a pretty good substitute. If nothing more, it was a human luxury to lie there and look far down the stretch of shaded lawn to the big stone wall—from the inside.

It is rather interesting to recall the fact that Brazos and Dumont was once a theatrical firm, because of course nowadays nobody thinks of them except in connection with motion-pictures. It is still more curious to recall the fact that Brazos and Dumont got into the picture business by trying to push some one else out of it. It is true, nevertheless, that, by taking over themselves the films of "My Lady of the Lilies," *alias* "Lady Margaret," they laid the first foundation of that immense business which now goes under the general name of Brazos and Dumont and under the specific names of half a dozen little "All-Leader," "New-Art," "Fiction Feature" and "Smith-Jones-Brown" companies.

This happy solution was partly the idea of Browning and partly of David Blake although both Brazos and Dumont always pretend that they had been "looking into" the picture business for a long time. At any rate it quashed the lawsuit and, in the end, everybody was happy, as everybody always was in the end—twenty years ago. Browning decided that the show business was too nerve-racking a thing for a middle-aged manufacturer. Fred Frayer decided also that it was far more comfortable to work with other people's money than to risk his own. Brazos and Dumont were glad to get him, for in those days men who knew anything about the business at all were rare. If his name has never risen above the list attached to a comfortable salary-roll, he is probably just as happy.

AS for Toots, well, as Frayer always said, "There are some who are born for the show business and some who ain't born at all." Toots seemed to decide that she had not been born for the picture business at least. More than that, one imagines that Toots had always known, deep down in her heart, for just what she had been born; for when the day did come when Blake drove Toots in the slow old victoria to her own little house, just to see that everything was still in its place, neither one of them cared to stay very long. Like Blake himself, Toots seemed rather eager to get back for tea on the terrace. Together they drove in the gates and up the long, winding drive, while Toots looked around her, supremely happy. She put her hand on Blake's sleeve and looked at him, smiling.

"Do you know?" she said. "I can't help saying it." She waved a hand over the smooth green lawn. "I think that this spot—not one just like it, but this very spot—is the thing that I have been living for all of my life. It seems so like home."

"Why shouldn't it?" asked David Blake.

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FAIR DAUGHTER OF A FAIRER MOTHER

(*Continued from page 83*)

"She'd make a better mother for me, I suppose. No, I don't mean that," she went on, more quickly and with a darkening face. "I guess I want her to have been bad. That lets me be bad too. Do you see?"

"*You* ain't bad," he laughed.

"You think not."

"With that hair and them blue eyes like your mother's. No. But, anyway," he went on, feeling his way slowly—he talked to so few people—"anyway, folks is different. She was more like a child, the way I size her up. She looked that way, and if she'd been bad, maybe she wouldn't have known the harm in it. But you're different."

"Why should I be any better than she was?" cried Linda impatiently.

"Because you got more brains."

"Have I?" she laughed. "Then I've got more than I want. I'm tired of thinking—my head cracks with it. I want just to feel and to be. I don't want to be responsible, or good either."

He looked at her face, which had grown pale and tormented looking, and finally he smiled.

"I don't just rightly see how you are going to avoid it. You *are* good. I reckon you inherited goodness from—from my friend."

From the road outside came the sound of whistling.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes—" it began—this was Tom Halton piping.

"Perhaps I *am* good," faltered Linda. "I'm sure sometimes I'm afraid so. But oh, I'm—I'm awfully lonely in the world."

John Branster was standing near the hibiscus hedge—he picked a pink blossom and slowly knelt and laid it on the ground between the rows of violets.

"I wish you could feel you wasn't quite so lonely."

"Do you think she loved me? Do you think she meant to come back to me?" she asked.

"There ain't a shadow of a doubt of it in my mind," he answered.

"If I believed that," said Linda, and her voice grew soft, "I wouldn't care at all whether she'd been good or bad. I'd believe she was good, the way you do."

John Branster stared at her, not understanding. She went on:

"And I'd do now whatever it would be that she'd want me to do."

Tom Halton now stood at the gap in the hibiscus hedge.

"TOM," she said, "this man saw my mother. He says she was beautiful and good. And because she was, for eighteen years he's made this place like this."

"Fine!" commented Halton, quite without suspicion. His hand tentatively went to his pocket—but Linda hurried on:

"I think, Tom," she said, with a queer wry smile, "that I'd like to think that some day some one will want to do that for me. I think that perhaps *I* want to be beautiful and good. And as I can't ever be as beautiful as she was, I'll have to be more good."

"Oh, confound you, Linda—" the man began, his cheerful face turning hard and ugly with anger. Then he stopped—something in her eyes, which were shining with tears, stopped him.

"Don't confound me, Tom Halton. You took your risks. And if you lose, you'll lose and take it standing up."

An instant they looked straight into each other's eyes. She went on:

"Why repeat ancient history, my friend? And not such damned pretty history after all. I've been thinking. I might have a daughter some day. Well, I know what's the pleasantest way for a daughter to think of a mother. I've tried one way and now I've just been trying another, taught me here. I like Mr. Branster's way better. It's the way I'd like my daughter to think of me."

"You don't seem to be thinking of me much," he protested, still angry.

"I don't know that I'm not. You've a daughter already, Tom, now that you mention it. And we were fixing a pretty way for her to think of her father, weren't we?"

"Oh, my wife will see to it anyhow that the child has a pretty way of thinking."

"Your wife?" drawled Branster, whom they had forgotten, in a soft voice but with an odd intonation that made them both turn quickly toward him "You're a married man, are you? And you got *her* to come down here with you, did you?"

"I came of my own accord," began the girl, "and nothing wrong has happened."

"Don't interfere, honey," he stopped her, and one a m went paternally around her shoulders.

"THE noon train's a good train for leaving town, mister. The folks at Tomocala ain't likely to be wanting you to stay on long after they hears this story. They ain't likely to make it any too comfortable for you."

"Don't interfere, please," this was Tom Halton speaking. "I don't care a rip what any one here thinks or does—except Miss Stevens."

"I reckon it's a good train" she answered, oddly enough falling into the phrase and cadence of John Branster. "You take it to-day and I'll take it to-morrow."

"And that's the end of al' between you and me, is it?"

"Dreams have to end. And to begin," she added inconsequentially, and took a step away from Branster toward the low violet-bordered mound. Then she held out her hand.

"Good-by, Tom. This won't be the last time for you, I'm afraid. so I'll wish you pleasant dreams. This was a pleasant dream while it lasted—until I woke up and found that I was beautiful and good. Go back to New York and tell them I'm that."

It was a hard leave-taking, and as he went he saw her smiling brilliantly at him, the famous smile that helped to make her famous.

But a minute later John Branster bent over, and patted her head awkwardly as she lay sobbing by the mossy, gray headstone that carried only the letters H. S.

"Go ahead and cry, honey," he said; "that's what your mama would want you to do."

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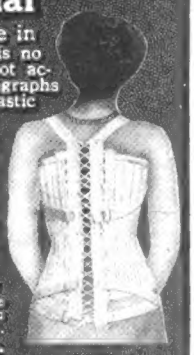

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